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[See page 335

They were still standing there in the open door, Henry with the candle in its glass globe held up over his head, and Naila beside him.

[illegible]

They [illegible] with the [illegible] and [illegible]

THE UNKNOWN LADY

A NOVEL

BY

JUSTUS MILES FORMAN

AUTHOR OF

"BIANCA'S DAUGHTER" "JASON"
"BUCHANAN'S WIFE"
ETC.

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TO

E. H.

THE UNKNOWN LADY

THE UNKNOWN LADY

From Sir Augustus Hayes, Bart., of Milton Priory, Kent —alias "*The Bart.,*" alias "*ce bon Monsieur le Barte*"—*at his rooms in London, to me in New York:*

"*Dear old Bill:*

"*I've a most lordly packet of good news to relate—though, I dare say, those confoundedly smart newspapers of yours will have robbed me of most of the surprise of it long before this letter is read—the best news there could possibly be (and if you don't think so may you be hanged as high as Haman—which was doubtless very high indeed, wasn't it?—for the flabby, purse-proud, self-centred carpet-knight of a fashionable portrait-painter of lap-dogs that you are!)*

"*You knew, old Bill, from my letter of December—or was it earlier still?—that Lord Mendham was at last gathered to his sinful fathers, and that the pictures were to be sold to settle the estate. And you are aware that in the lot—second in importance only to the big Velasquez—was Henry Trent's 'Unknown Lady,' which you and I should know as 'L'Introuvable' no. 3, the one with the unfinished hand and drapery.*

"*Well, the sale came off yesterday at Christie's and the 'Unknown Lady' was bought by Duveens for eight thousand*

guineas; but it is almost an open secret that they were acting in the interest of Archie Belford, who means the 'Introuvable' to go to the nation.

"How's that?

"So when you come to London in the spring we'll go, you and I, arm-in-arm to the Tate gallery, and stand before the second of poor Henry's national monuments, as already, in the Luxembourg, we've stood before the first.

"It occurs to me, you know, that something like a record is being established. A young man paints five pictures—portraits of the same woman—just five pictures in all—and one of them is hanging in the Luxembourg and another in the Tate: and I dare say the remaining three will gravitate in time to three other great public collections somewhere. How about the no. 2 that your millionaire Jaynes has? Couldn't he be persuaded to leave it, at his death—or even before—to the Metropolitan Museum? He might be worth trying.

"I feel such a prodigious sense of vicarious pride over the immortality that has come all unexpected and unsought to Henry Trent. We all feel it, I'm sure, all of us who knew him and loved him. I wonder what Henry feels, looking on from wherever he may be? I've a shrewd idea that he doesn't care a tinker's damn. He never did, you know. He had less pride in this great accomplishment of his than any other man I ever knew who could do a thing even passably well. Pride? He didn't know what it meant. He was looking too eagerly at something else.

"Lady Crail came up from the country expressly to go to Christie's with me, and there we found Fordyce, who lives in London now and writes stories that are supposed to be amusing, and Jellaby, still very æsthetic but getting gray and a little shabby, and Ames, the Australian, who has been made

an A.R.A., and, of all people, little Meunier the elegant of Julian's! He's still an elegant and wears an eyeglass and has married an heiress. We asked him for news of Laplace, but he didn't know any. Laplace, it seems, disappeared some years ago. I wonder where he is and what he's doing? Still singing his Vêpres Siciliennes, I'm sure, with another partner, and bellowing and blustering and amusing everybody.

"In a far corner of the room I caught sight of a tall, slender woman in black, with a mourning veil down her face, and I thought it looked like Marian. Lady Crail thought so too, and, when the sale was over, made me go and find out. But when I had come to her corner the woman in black was gone. I wonder.

"We had a quiet dinner that evening at my rooms—Lady Crail and old Miss Angela Thursby (you never knew her, did you? She met Henry once, in Paris, when you weren't there, and fell in love with him, as so many women did, young and old!) and Archie Belford, 'the genial duke,' and I.

"We talked, long and late, about poor Henry, and about you, and about Naïla and Marian, and all the little circle of us who were so happy and miserable and busy and ambitious and contented in the Rue d'Assas more than ten years ago. Ten years? Eleven, twelve, thirteen? It seemed to us thirty! It seems thirty to me now—a prodigious stretch of time. But long or short, ten years or a hundred, we found our memories green. And out of that rambling retrospective talk came an Idea. I think it was mine, in the beginning, but it seemed very soon to be everybody's. Anyhow, here it is!

"Oughtn't the truth be told about Henry Trent?

"He died a great man, and great men's lives belong, in a way, to the world. The facts of them ought to be public property unless the facts are unbecoming or disgraceful or be-

littling or would hurt some one else in the relation. There is no one to be hurt by the telling of poor Henry's story, now, and his life was so strange and mysterious and romantic—so different from other lives—that, at the very least, it should make a fascinating tale. Taking it on a higher plane than that (as surely we may), the relation of it should stand as a kind of explanation or interpretation, or whatever word you choose, of those five great pictures he painted—the inscription on the monument, to be fanciful about it.

"Already there is beginning to gather about his name a quantity of vague rumor — preposterous stuff. I hear echoes of it now and then and fly into a rage. Let's put a stop to such rubbish, once and for all, by telling the real truth!

"So much for my feeling in the matter—and Lady Crail and Belford agree with me heartily. Now as to ways and means. If it is to be done at all—if poor Henry's story is to be given to the public—who could do it so well as you, old Bill? You knew him better than the rest of us did. You grew up with him from childhood, as we didn't. You were closest of all to him through every phase and every stage of his career. You even directed his mind toward paint and canvas. Why shouldn't you do the last service to Henry that anybody can do him—and the greatest? Yes, I know you'll laugh and say 'tosh!' Laugh away! but afterward think it over. I fancy you'll find you can't refuse.

"Take up your pen and tell the whole truth about Henry Trent—not just as a great artist, for you and I know he wasn't, in any usual sense, a great artist at all, but as a kind of modern Prometheus who stole fire from heaven to light him on his way—as a man who wanted something so terribly that he learned to paint tremendous pictures because they might

help him get what he wanted—as a being who saw things that other men never even guessed at.

"I'm very much in earnest about all this and you must be in earnest too. Think it over well, and then let me hear from you!

"I've a lot of personal gossip that I had meant to put in here, but I've already written at such prodigious length that the gossip must wait. Lady Crail said I was to give you her love, but I think she means to write herself, in a day or two, either to you or the 'Power that Is.'

"So no more to-day, old Bill, from yours aff'ly,

"THE BART."

Well, there you have, word for word, without expurgation or emendation, the dear old Bart.'s letter that came to me a week ago. Of course the news about Henry's new glory filled me with joy and pride as it had filled the Bart. It spurred me on, also, to something I'd long meant to do. I shall lay siege to that King of railways and Prince Patron of all the fine arts Wilfred Jaynes about "L'Introuvable" no. 2. It would be a splendid thing to see Henry Trent properly enshrined in his own land as he is now enshrined in two others.

What a triumph for a man who died before his thirties, and who—as the Bart. says—never cared a tinker's damn, anyhow, about painting except as a staff to help him on his eager way!

It's quite true that he was never in any ordinary sense an artist. I knew that well enough. We all knew it. He never could paint a tree, or a horse, or a house, or, for that matter, a blade of grass. But, great heavens! how Henry Trent could paint the face of the woman he had never seen

—just that and nothing more! With what incredible brilliancy and force and inward light and poignant passion! With what sheer, celestial—or, if you like, diabolic—skill of hand—knowledge of his tools—mastery of inert color squeezed out of a lead tube!

The "Introuvable" in those five never-to-be-forgotten, never-to-be-surpassed canvases lived and breathed. She smiled at you—spoke to you—gripped your heart between her ill-rendered hands (you know, Henry could never draw a hand as long as he lived). She haunted your dreams, waking and sleeping, as she haunted his.

I retract my words and I apologize for the Bart.'s. The lad was a great artist! I have but to close my eyes, call up before me the face of that then unknown woman, and I'm sure of it. What if he couldn't paint a tree and never knew that the atmosphere between a painter's eye and his object made any difference. What if he couldn't draw a hand, or name the bones in a skeleton? He was a great artist, and his tale of five pictures will be alive and thrilling thousands when my hard-labored and (if I do say it, who shouldn't) well-drawn works are stored in the lumber-room and forgotten: yes, and the Bart.'s too. Yet we're both likely (though again I say it, who shouldn't) to die rather famous men, as artists go.

As for the rest of that long letter—the Bart.'s great idea of my writing a sort of life of Henry Trent—I laughed it to scorn. That was at the end of its first reading. Preposterous conception! As well ask me to go on with Henry's painting—turn out five more "Introuvables"—or fifty!

I gave the letter to my wife to read, and when she came to that part about the Great Idea she exclaimed, and looked up at me, and read it again, and said with emphasis—a

sort of dismay—"Oh, *dear!*" before she went on to the end.

And when she'd finished I said, "Of course it's out of the question."

And she said, thoughtfully: "Yes, of course. You're much too busy. It would take forever. Besides—" She stopped there and I don't know what "besides" meant, for I learned long ago never to pursue those unfinished sentences of my wife's. It makes her cross. I think she doesn't know the ends herself.

But the next morning she came into the studio where I had made a wretched beginning, and flown into a rage, and sent the model home, and was sitting gathered up in a sullen ball in the corner with a pipe. She went to the north window and stood there for a long time tapping on the glass with her fingers and gazing down upon the bare trees and the brown turf and the cold water of the little lake. (My workshop is in Fifty-ninth Street, overlooking the Park.) And at last she said:

"I suppose you'll have to do it, Bill."

I knew well enough what my wife meant. I pretended not to, but gave that over after a moment, and we talked for a long time of the Bart.'s Great Idea.

I think I had known all the while how it would be.

I couldn't refuse. As the Bart. said, I was the man. If anybody was to embark upon that difficult task it must be the one who had known Henry longest and best—who had come nearest of all other men (though that wasn't very near, Heaven knows) to the strange vision which had set him apart from the world.

It goes without saying that I have, out of the twenty necessary qualifications for such a task, but two—some knowledge

and a great love. To tell the story of Henry Trent as it deserves to be told, I should have a literary skill that, alas! I lack altogether. I am, I believe, a fairly good painter—and I will with pleasure prove that to you by painting your portrait whenever you like and I can spare the time—but I am no story-teller at all.

And so it must be a plain tale that I make here, setting down what I know without much regard for form or sequence—a rambling, discursive, circuitous tale whose only virtue is that it's true.

I wish I might hope to do better for you, Henry!

I

IN dreams of the night it comes back to me now, the little old village where Henry Trent and I played together at pirates (with supernumerary assistance), or at searches for lost treasure, or at red Indians, or at sanguinary episodes in the Crusades. In dreams I drink its green peace and breathe its fragrant atmosphere. In dreams I am once more a little boy and Henry is another little boy, and the sleepy world about us throngs with ready and delightful and protean mysteries—like a wood-lane to a pair of puppies. The very orchard trees take on armor of proof or Saracen turbans, or they are red Indian hordes or herds of buffalo. The hollyhocks in the garden and the phlox and the larkspurs are serried ranks of a hostile foe. The roses are gracious ladies. Niobe, the tabby cat, patient mother of many, is now a fleeing gazelle (and never a gazelle fled oftener or faster or with better reason!), now a somewhat furtive and uneasy lion in the African jungle of sweet peas, now a panther snarling (or is it mewing?) from a Rocky Mountain crag.

In dreams of the night I see those comfortable foursquare houses, white-painted, green-shuttered, dusky and lavender-smelling within of a summer's day. I see the lazy village street, I hear the sweet, low voices of good village folk.

A little, tired boy creeps in from play, and so it must be six o'clock now. The play was hard to leave, but the other

little boy, and the other little boys, too—and doubtless little girls as well—had had to leave it also, which made one's lot easier to bear. He sups on bread and milk provided by Drusilla, stoutest and most comfortable of Hebes, who can be persuaded, if in a good mood, to slip into the bowl a spoonful of dampish, crumbly, ambrosial, brown sugar.

So the gods supped on Olympus.

And afterward the little tired boy who is, by now, sleepy as well, goes on into a dim and shadowy room which smells of the ghost of dried rose leaves in a Canton bowl, and a lovely vision in rustling petticoats, and ringlets, and big brown eyes, clasps him tight in her arms, and kisses his hot little face, and mothers him more sweetly than ever any little boy in all the world was mothered.

He begs to be sung to. The lovely vision with the ringlets makes an exquisite face of dramatic astonishment and says:

"But, *darling*, it's so very, very, very late! And you'll go to sleep in the middle of it. You *know* you will." Then she laughs, like silver bells a long way off, and goes to the piano and strikes low chords and sings, like an Evening Star, with a sweet, true, hushed, mezza-voce (the Morning Stars sang loud, I'm sure) some little old song: "Annie Laurie" or "Sur le Pont d'Avignon" or "Baby's Boat's the Silver Moon." No, she couldn't have sung that, though, upon my honor, I've been thinking for years she did, and was astonished and shocked only the other day to learn that it wasn't composed until long after the lovely singer had gone from among us to carol with the other Evening Stars.

And I'm sure they met her there with tender, welcoming arms and glad hearts.

Of course the sleepy little boy was asleep and dreaming long before the last verse of the song was done—so fast

asleep that he never even knew when Drusilla-Hebe gathered him to her ample bosom and bore him away. But later on he half awoke, in his cool, smooth bed, at the kiss the beautiful vision came to bless him with, and so drifted away again to fields of asphodel, bearing in his ears the sound of her voice.

"Sweet dreams, darling! Sweet dreams!"

They were sweet, indeed.

And sweet now, belle petite maman, sweet now are the dreams that bring that little boy back to me, and the old green village, and the dusky, shadowy room at evening where you sat and sang "Sur le Pont d'Avignon." Sweet and sad together. The tears start as I write about them, and there comes in my breast a sharp stab of pain, for alas! that was all so long ago, and they can never come again, the good days of long ago.

Ah, well! We've all been little, tired, sleepy children, I dare say—and grown up, and shed a tear over it.

I must explain—No! first, I must find a name for this most delectable of all ancient and sweet-smelling villages. I'll call it Blandford. I don't know why. That's the first name that comes to me, and I choose it because it is so different from the real one. And now I must explain that Blandford—it sounds oddly in my ear—wasn't in any true sense my home, for we were city folk and lived in Madison Avenue, my mother and my Uncle George and I. My father had died before I was born. So we lived in the city during the winter months, and daily, after the age of six, I was led by Suzanne, the "Blue Alsatian Bonne," as my Uncle George called her—but she spoke and made me speak as good French as there is in sunny France — to the school of Mr. Charles Augustus Howell in Thirty-sixth Street,

where I drew caricatures and learned about Arms and the Man.

It was on the first of May of each year that we went to the country, to Blandford (still it sounds oddly in my ear), and into the house where my mother had been born and had grown to womanhood, and my Uncle George, as well—though he grew to manhood, instead.

Because the country was good for little boys.

It was, belle petite maman! It was.

But Henry Trent and his mother lived the year round in Blandford. And he was fatherless also, and they weren't too well off—not that that mattered in Blandford. A little went a long way there, for there was no vulgar ostentation. No one was rich. We weren't, even, though I fancy we were richer than most. One lived plainly, and if pockets didn't sag and jingle, at least the blood ran clear and blue. None bluer in all blue New England. And blood meant something in those days.

There weren't any trusts when I was a child, and Railway-King was a new word, and gasolene wasn't used to make a stench in the highways, but to clean things with—if, indeed, gasolene existed at all.

I say Henry and his mother lived the year round in Blandford, and so, in general, they did; but I'm reminded here that up to the time Henry and I were perhaps seven or eight they were often away during the summer visiting a sister of Mrs. Trent who dwelt somewhere in Rhode Island. Later on they seem not to have gone there much. I don't know why. And so it happens that we two saw little or nothing of each other when we were very little boys. Afterward—from seven or eight until he died at twenty-four—we were as inseparable as the Siamese twins (whom we

once saw at a show and thought unspeakably revolting).

Indeed I don't even remember when or how we first met, but I think it must have been at a very tender age indeed—so tender that I've forgotten. I cannot remember beyond my fourth year—save two or three isolated circumstances of no importance: once that I was carried by night in my mother's arms out on the roof of the big front porch to see a house burning, and was delighted with it and wanted our house to burn, too; and another time when Niobe had a fit in the pantry and I was there stealing chocolate-cake and was frightened out of my wits, thinking it a sign sent from heaven to punish my sin, and dropped my cake (which Niobe afterward ate) and climbed up on a shelf beside the japanned bread-box and wept there lustily, while poor Niobe ran round and round in narrowing circles, and foamed at the mouth, and at last lay twisting and jerking on the pantry floor.

It is a great grief to me—for years it has been a great grief, that I could not have known Henry as a little child while he still had a child's open frankness. What I might have learned of that keen, strange vision of his! What worlds, unknown to the rest of us, I might have gazed into! And yet, as I reflect upon it, I should have been a child too, and I shouldn't have understood.

What I know of him at this period, and it isn't much, I have had in part from Henry's maturer recollections; in part, many years after, from his mother.

She was a well-meaning woman—and we must let her go at that—a vague, not unkindly soul, honestly bewildered and a little frightened before a thing uncommon, and, therefore, plainly wrong.

"He was so different from other children, Willie!"

Aye, so he was! So he was. So was I, also. And so were you, and emphatically so is that blue-eyed, golden-haired miracle that beneficent Heaven has allowed you somehow to bring into this commonplace world. Different? I should think so!

She meant something more, though, Henry's mother—poor, honest, well-meaning, uncomprehending, gray goose who'd hatched a swan and didn't know what to do about it—understood nothing in the world about swans, and so shut her eyes and administered the best goose-upbringing! She meant more. There was something beyond maternal pride in that cry—retrospective uneasiness and anxiety and terror. It was a veritable cri du cœur.

No, I never knew him in those days—or if we'd met I have forgotten it. But I love to reconstruct him to myself—put him together from the stray bits of data I have gathered.

I see that little lonely boy with his solemn, great eyes open to some mystery which the world about him couldn't see, and my heart bleeds for his loneliness. I yearn to know what he knew. It seems that he used to have a favorite haunt, away down in the lower orchard past the gardens (this was at the aunt's place in Rhode Island)—a playhouse built among the twisted limbs of an old quince-tree—I had one, too, in Blandford, but it was in a cherry-tree. I fell out of it once. And it seems that because he was such a very lonely little boy he had conjured up out of his rich imagination a make-believe playmate in a make-believe world. It was a little girl, of course, a sort of Fairy Princess little girl of alluring aspect and delectable ways, and the two understood each other and were altogether happy.

In this simple fashion began one of the most extraordinary human experiences that I have ever heard of.

"But of course, Henry"—I quote from the mother now—"of course I *couldn't* let him go on in this way. It was so very—*unwholesome*. Children should not be encouraged in imagining things. It would have been very wrong of me to encourage him. I did my best."

Yes, I'm sure she did her best, her awful best. I can see her doing it. I can see her at the head of the garden, calling that little boy in from his imagined delights; and I can see him come, his big eyes clouded, his feet lagging along the garden path—chidden, led by the hand up to the house, and there made to read an improving book (for she went in for improving books, his mother did; Henry remembered them with vindictive loathing for many a year).

I see him enduring all this in his patient, passive, uncomplaining way—he'd long given up making a row about it, or fighting openly for his rights. And then, as soon as his mother's back is turned and the aunt's back, then I see him off again like a shot, back to his habitation of enchantment, his eyes afire, his little heart beating as furiously as his little feet beat the cinder path.

He used to slip away at night, I know, leaving his crib-bed, and letting himself out by a back door; and you may conceive a little of the allurement when I say that he was terribly afraid of the dark. (He never quite outgrew it.) I see him, a wee white figure in his little night-shirt, a tiny fleeing figure that speeds down through the gloom, pursued and compassed about by goblins and beasts and all manner of evil night monsters—tears of pure terror in his eyes, sobs catching at his throat, till in the end he wins to the old quince-tree and the safe haven of delight.

"At first we used to think he walked in his sleep," his mother said plaintively to me. "He was so *very* afraid of the dark that I couldn't believe he would venture out into it in his senses. But he did. I used to find him there, Willie, up in his playhouse in the quince-tree. So often I used to find him there!

"Oh yes, I punished him, of course. Yes, in many ways, but he—just endured it and went on as before. Punishment never did any good at all. I would perhaps find him gone out of his crib the very next night."

I asked a question.

"Yes, he would often be talking. It made me very nervous to hear him. He would ask questions and seem to hear the answers. It made me *very* nervous.

"Yes, oh yes! He was always willing—that is at first, before he began to grow sullen about it—to talk about his Little Girl, and what she said and did, but I never encouraged him to do that. I felt sure it would be wrong to humor him—"

"Wrong!" Oh, towering monument of human blindness and pride and smug abject self-sufficiency! Oh, pitiful unpardonable gray goose before whom I bowed my head and clenched my teeth lest I break out in railings! What a golden treasury of unguessed knowledge was lost to the world because you felt sure it would be wrong to humor Henry!

"He used to say odd, unchild-like things sometimes. About matters he couldn't possibly have met with, I mean; and when I asked him about them he would say that the Little Girl told him. He seemed to realize no particular distinction between his normal life and this very unwholesome, imaginative make-belief of his.

"You have never been a mother, Willie" (True! true!), "and you cannot possibly imagine how a mother is distressed by such things. I used to wonder—I almost thought—well, that there was something not quite right about him. I took it to the Throne—oh, so often! But the Lord chasteneth, William. Whom He loveth He chasteneth."

And so, with no more than this misty, hazy, tantalizing glimpse of him we must leave that little boy, for this is all I have ever been able to learn—just hints, suggestions—no more. The Ivory Gate closes. Outside it we stand helpless. Within, surrounded by mysteries that we may not even guess, two children play amid golden mystic delights.

And you must understand that it was not until very much later—not until many years afterward—that I myself ever had any slightest hint at all of Henry Trent's secret—ever knew that he was in essential things different from other people—save in odd, little, at that time insignificant, matters that now and again puzzled me—ever even guessed at his strange secret. His mother (unhappy soul!) had done her work well. She'd shamed him—driven him into a sullen and lasting silence—made him believe that his Other World was a silly wrong thing to be hidden out of sight and, if possible, forgotten.

Only it was stronger than she. Hidden out of sight it certainly was, for years to come; but forgotten, never.

II

I HAVE already said that I don't remember just when or how it was that Henry Trent and I first met. Looking back upon that faint dawn of history I seem to remember a time when he wasn't there, and I played with other little boys and girls. Then all at once he *was* there, but my searching eye alights upon him with no sense of surprise. He seems to belong—to have been there always—if one didn't know better—and Henry and I seem to be on terms of the greatest intimacy—captains or generals of contending hosts—intrepid brother explorers of the tropical, lion-infested wilderness behind the apple orchard, where, from the orchard wall to the far railway line, the grass grew tall and unkempt and Blandford's cows were tethered—I should say, herds of elephants wandered at will, trumpeting in that virgin solitude, and uprooting great trees with their powerful trunks.

It is not strange, I suppose, that the memory of a professional picture-maker should be a pictorial memory. It is difficult for me to remember what people said about a thing many years ago, but I remember with faultless accuracy just exactly how they looked when they said it, and where they were, and how the things about them looked. Also, though it has nothing to do with pictures, I remember places by their smells, and something like a reproduction of a certain smell will bring back to me whole trains of forgotten circum-

stances and scores of forgotten faces and a keen, sharp ache of nostalgia for happy youthful days that are gone, and folk that are scattered or dead.

Henry Trent had this sensitiveness to odors, too. It tortured him all through his later years.

Just here, while my thoughts go groping back among those sweet early days in Blandford, there comes to me one of the sudden pictorial flashes of memory that I have spoken of. It has to do with the first and only quarrel that ever occurred between Henry and me—a quarrel foolish and trivial enough, but that nothing is trivial to a child.

Would God all grown-ups could realize that!

I am not quite clear about what sort of a game it was we had been playing, but I think it was tree-tag, and I was racing across an open space of the orchard and Henry Trent was hard upon me trying to "tag" me before I reached the biggest plum-tree that had lost a limb from lightning and had a great white scar all down one side. Anyhow, I fell flat on my face and hurt my lip so that it was a trial not to snivel, and I got up again, a little boy consumed with righteous rage. I thought Henry had tripped me on purpose, with his foot, and I accused him of it hotly—in unmeasured language. I am sorry now that I called Henry Trent a sneak, but I did, and I meant it, and I thought he was. Henry said:

"I never tripped you, and I'm not a sneak. You know I'm not."

I suppose I said: "You are!" And I suppose he said: "I'm not, either!"

So we faced each other quite white with rage, and one of the little girls—Janet Fordyce—began to cry, and the two other little boys ran up to see what would happen.

Just then my Uncle George appeared, with his hands in his pockets, singing, "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," as well as he could for the cigar that stuck up from one corner of his mouth—and that was very well indeed, for he had a lovely baritone voice, and often sang duets with my mother.

My Uncle George stopped singing, and took his cigar out of his mouth and said:

"God bless my soul and body! What's all this? What's all this, hey?"

It took him no more than an instant to see what it all was, and I am afraid he was delighted, for he had true sporting instincts and, earlier in life, had been—unless tradition lied—no bad man of his hands. He exclaimed:

"God bless my bones and body if the pair of bantams ain't having a set-to! Now look here, my masters, we'll have this little 'go' all fair and shipshape. No biting and scratching, mind ye! No more jawing. Go at it like gentlemen. Put up your hands and keep your eyes open. Now then!"

For one dreadful moment I saw Henry's face go even whiter than it had been, and his eyes wander as if he had some desperate thought of bolting. He was no warrior by nature. I remember that I felt keen shame for him. Then he put his head down and flew at me with his arms going like flails.

My Uncle George pulled us apart by the shirt collars, and lectured us severely upon the ethics of personal encounter. He reminded us that gentlemen fought with their hands, and that only bears and little girls hugged. So after a breathing space we stood off again, and I see Henry Trent here before me now as plainly as I see the opposite wall of this room—more plainly, indeed, for he blurs it by his pres-

ence—I see him, a slim little figure in blue, baggy knickerbockers and bare knees, and a blue-and-white shirt with its sleeves rolled up. I see his white face with its big blazing eyes, and a scratch across one cheek-bone, and the dark hair tumbled in disorder. He looks very fierce and determined and as if he would rather die than give way. He was the sort of fighter Polonius advised Laertes to be.

We flew at each other once more and seem to have done rather better this time, for I have a misty vision of my Uncle George hovering about, first to one side, then the other, crying encouragement and advice and direction, and becoming so excited that he lets his cigar go out, and forgets it and drops it on the ground and dances on it.

I forgot to state that, long since, Janet Fordyce and the two other little girls had fled the scene with panic-stricken cries of terror.

The next thing I remember is a sort of tornado of sprigged muslin, bearing in its midst my shocked and indignant and outraged mother, who seized upon the hostile forces and dragged us apart. I wasn't altogether sorry, for I believe I was getting a bit the worst of it, but Henry was. He struggled to free himself and couldn't. My beautiful mother, holding each of us clasped tight against opposite sides of her, turned upon my uncle like a queen in a tragedy. I could feel her trembling all over.

"George!" said my mother in a voice I had never before heard from her. "For shame, George!" And my uncle stood first on one leg and then on the other, and got very red and sheepish and shamefaced. He made some feeble protest.

"Now then! Now then, dammit! Sallie, this ain't any place for a woman, you know. Just you leave all this to me.

I know what I'm about. The little bantams were hard at it before I came along. Just looking on to see fair play. Do 'em good. D'you want to make milksops of 'em? Not while I'm about, hang me!"

But my mother turned away from him without another word, and bent above us two thwarted warriors. She cried:

"Oh, my precious darlings, don't you know how *very, ve-ry, ve-ry* wrong and wicked and dreadful and—and bad manners it is to fight? How awful of you! I don't know what I *shall* do about it." She knelt down on the ground, holding us close in her arms so that we were all squeezed in together and mixed up, the three of us, and I'm not sure that she didn't shed a ready and harmless tear, for she was the gentlest soul as well as the loveliest woman that was in all the world, and she couldn't endure ill feeling or violence of any kind. It made her quite ill.

"You must both apologize," she said, "and say you're sorry and kiss each other and ne-ver do it any more."

Kiss each other! We'd rather have been hanged and drawn and quartered and nailed up on the white Colonial pillars of the front porch for all the world to see. We'd rather have been boiled in oil. We'd rather have starved to death while a circle of grinning friends ate plum-cake round us. I heard my Uncle George emit a dreadful apoplectic sound that was a combination of moan and harmless oath, and I think Henry and I uttered at the same moment a sort of squawk of the purest horror.

"Well, anyhow," said my dear mother, "you must shake hands, darlings, and promise me faithfully—the faithfulest as ever is—that you'll never quarrel or fight with each other again as long as you live. Look me in the eyes and promise!"

So we promised her (and faithfully kept the promise), and

my mother kissed us both—which was quite a different matter from the shameful thing she would, at first, have had us commit. Then we went up through the garden to the house, and, upon some obscure and illogical theory of reward, were fed with milk and carroway-seed cookies, and my mother obtained permission for Henry to stay that night with me.

We had a pillow fight (that's not fighting) and broke a vase, and, after all the household was still, crept out of my window onto the roof of the kitchen, and lay there on our backs on the shingles, and reached up into the low-hanging boughs of the old cherry-tree, and ate black oxheart cherries until I wonder we didn't die of it.

But my Uncle George was sent to Coventry, for my mother wouldn't speak to him all the rest of that evening. She was seriously angry and never forgave him for almost another twenty-four hours—the longest period she had cherished rancor in all her life. He was dreadfully cast down about it and humbled, and thought himself the lowest of sinners until he was kissed and made up with.

You mustn't think ill of him, however, because, in spite of his mild sporting instincts, and his odd, harmless oaths and a still more harmless occasional vanity, there never lived a better man than my Uncle George. A simple, honest gentleman who wouldn't hurt a fly, and had a heart as true as gold and as tender as a woman's. As a little child I looked up to him and respected him and honored him; I look up to him and respect him and honor him now, for he is still alive—a kindly soul of infinite charities, a friend to all men, a chaste worshipper of all good ladies, an eternally faithful lover of one of them who died before ever I was born.

I wish there were an Uncle George in every family. The world would be the sweeter for it.

Now, an inconclusive squabble between two little boys in a garden may seem, on the surface of it, a very unimportant happening indeed—too unimportant to be included in even such a hotchpotch of mixed and miscellaneous events as is this veracious chronicle, but in very truth it was the cause, accidentally enough, of determining my career and, through mine, Henry's.

For the very next morning after Henry had gone home I sat down with a square of rough, gray cardboard torn out of a hat-box, and a pencil and a bit of rubber, and drew a picture of that historic combat so consummate in the skill of its composition, so faithful in the matter of likeness, so racy in poise and movement, so masterly in anatomical exposition, that my mother, coming upon me unawares, was at first spellbound and then wept tears of excitement and delight. She had had a brother younger than my Uncle George and very dear to her, with conspicuous artistic talents, but cut off, alas! in the midst of his youthful promise. And it seems my dear mother had long hoped and prayed that the mantle might descend upon me.

She showed the battle picture that evening to my Uncle George (after he had been kissed and forgiven), and he was excited about it, too, and, before the week ended, all Blandford knew that little Willie Castle was to be a great painter and sit in the seats of the mighty.

It is time, I should think, to venture a guess about that early masterpiece. My guess is that it was about as hopelessly juvenile a performance as ever looked full of glorious promise to a doting mother and a fond uncle. I should like to know exactly what unprejudiced Blandford thought, but I shall never know that. At any rate they had to exclaim over it for many a long day where it stood propped up on

the mantel in the drawing-room with a pink silk scarf draped across the top of it—for that dreadful fashion was just spreading athwart the land and making everything it touched hideous.

And after this I scrawled pictures and caricatures and libellous misrepresentations of nature's beautiful works from sunrise to sunset, and was applauded for it.

I dare say it did no great harm.

But now I come to another event of that same summer which is also important in this rambling history (because of what came of it later)—more important than the one I have already told, for I fancy I should have become, sooner or later, a dauber of canvas, whether or not Henry Trent and I had ever fought in our garden—and so my example would have led him to give the world those five supreme works of art.

My mother had a distant cousin (third or fourth, I believe) in England, who was a very great lady, indeed, nothing less than the Countess of Crail, and her ladyship chose this summer to make a visit to America about some property of hers in Pennsylvania where there was reason to think coal lay concealed in large quantities. Lord Crail didn't come with her, for he was at the time in Continental parts unknown. I am afraid he was a very bad lot, indeed—the Wicked Earl of the story-books and the old-fashioned drama; and when he died rather miserably a few years ago no one even pretended to be sorry—not even his cousin who succeeded to the title.

So my mother's cousin and her little daughter, Lady Mary Borrow, and an elderly uncle made the voyage together, and, when they had settled the business of the coal lands, came to us at Blandford for a fortnight's visit—except the elderly uncle, who remained in New York.

It is the most delightful memory of my early days, and the more delightful because I had been, from the first earliest rumors, a thorough-going pessimist about it, and so the happy truth came with all the shock of a surprise.

For you see, while my mother was busy in superintending all sorts of household preparations for the event, my Uncle George thought it well to coach me up in the niceties of conduct toward the nobility. I was to kiss the hand of my mother's cousin and I was to remember always to address her as "your ladyship," because that was becoming in the young. And I was to call her ladyship's daughter "Lady Mary" until given permission to dispense with the title. This and that I was to do on pain of bringing endless disgrace upon my family and upon the land of my birth. Also there was a good deal of reference to the grandeur of English life among the upper classes—too much, perhaps. But you mustn't get the idea, from all this, that my Uncle George was a snob. He was as far from that as any man ever was in this world, and all his lecturing and counsel were merely to insure my making a good impression. He couldn't have borne seeing me bring a blush to my dear mother's cheek. But for all that he made me wish that Lady Crail and her daughter were in Jericho. He made me hate those innocent and unsuspecting ladies as they'd probably never been hated before in all their lives. I was quite sure that they were about to ruin my summer, and I looked forward to them with dark and secret bitterness.

What a blissful awakening was in store for me!

I came into the drawing-room on the morning of their arrival—I had been, I don't know where, in morose hiding, until I heard the carriage drive up—and my mother turned

and called me to her, where she stood in the centre of the room. She said:

"Here's my boy, Agatha! He's a darling, and you must love him."

Then I was aware of a beautiful tall lady—taller by half a head than my mother—and very simply dressed. I think I had been expecting a coronet and a court train and jewels. She was dark, with big black eyes and black hair, and a lovely, kind smile.

I made my bow and took up her hand and kissed it. And I mumbled something—I don't know what, but I am sure that I came out strong on the "ladyship," for that was the one word to which my memory clung with a sort of drowning desperation. But the beautiful dark lady gave a little laugh and bent over me and took my head between her hands and kissed me on both cheeks. She seemed to have felt that a foreign tongue was probably safe from my comprehension, for she exclaimed:

"Mais qu'il est beau, ton fils! Un petit dieu grec! Et comme il fait gentiment le cour!"

Of course I got quite red with confusion at that, as any little boy might do at being called a small Greek god, but a kindly Providence, which has had a way of befriending me in desperate moments (may it long continue!), provided a funny little phrase, got recently out of a French book, much too grown-up for me, and I bowed again and said:

"Alors, Madame la Comtesse, paraît qu'il n'y a que de beauté chez nous ce matin."

I had a succès fou!

The beautiful lady gave a scream of delight and kissed me again a dozen times. I stole a glance at my mother and she was pink and her eyes were shining with pride. And after

that morning nothing in this world, no dreary waste of imbecility, not even a lifetime of unillumined dulness on my part, could ever have persuaded Lady Crail that I was anything but a sort of human miracle, a prodigiously inspired wit and courtier—a Sydney, a Chesterfield, a Sir Walter Raleigh, all compressed into one and incarnated in the person of a petit dieu grec of seven years. She looked upon me with a mixture of joy and awe.

And all for the sheerest accident in the world—the merest shadow of the ghost of a fluke—a sentence caught out of the air and repeated by lips that scarcely understood what they were saying. I ought to be bowed down with shame at the thought that I never confessed, but—more shame to me!—I laughed when I remembered it all just now.

The tall lady turned to a little girl beside her—the loveliest little girl imaginable, of six years, and so like her mother that they might have been twins—one small and one grown up. And she said:

"This is Mary. She speaks French, too—much better French than mine. I'm sure you'll adore each other."

I looked at the little dark girl who was looking at me quite frankly and with the merriest smile I ever saw, and I was quite sure I should do at least my half of the adoring. I made for her hand, but she came a step closer and put up her face, and though, at that time of my life, I had a natural horror of kissing—except in the case of grown-up lovely ladies—I kissed her on the lips that were so incredibly soft and flowerlike and so artlessly puckered up, and she kissed me back. And I remember quite well that a little genial glow ran all over me—like a warm shiver.

So I was taken captive by a kiss—the willingest captive that ever rattled chains—and no kiss that came my way for

many a year after that, whether from child or maid or woman, was ever quite the same—ever brought to me quite so delicious a little, warm, all-over glow—ever obliterated the memory of that summer morning when a very immature Samson was wooed and won and made a slave of by little Mary Borrow in my mother's drawing-room.

Some one, I suppose it must have been my mother, suggested that I take my cousin to see the garden. I asked her:

"Will you come, Lady Mary?" but my Delilah, I regret to state, made a face at me, and said, "Bovver!" and her ladyship cried out:

"Heavens! you mustn't call the child names. She won't be fit to live with."

So we went out into the sunlight, and Mary challenged me to a race down the long stretch of green turf behind the house, and I let her beat me.

The first fruits of my subjugation!

It must have seemed a rather small garden to Mary, far from impressive, but she was delighted with it, and never bragged by even so much as a word of those superior splendors in Oxfordshire which I saw and duly admired years later. She ran from corner to corner, for all the world like an inquisitive little fox-terrier, poking her small head into everything that was enclosed or that seemed to offer entertainment, from Rover's kennel to the poultry-houses and the vine-covered shed where the gardener's tools were kept. She was fascinated by the playhouse in the cherry-tree and we climbed up there and sat among leafy branches and exchanged personal history.

It was there and then that I first heard of "the Bart.," whose letter I have put at the head of this chronicle. My cousin called him, alas! "Gussie," and he was, by an odd

freak of relationship, her half-great-uncle, though only ten years older, for he was the son of Mary's maternal grandfather by a second and very late marriage—when the old gentleman was well past seventy.

And he, too, was to be an artist and paint lovely pictures! and had already begun to take drawing lessons after leaving Eton. I told her about my own ambitions (or was it, perhaps, performances?), and she was greatly excited and demanded a picture at once for her very own. So I pulled out my ever-ready pad of paper from a capacious pocket, and, in a few moments, handed her the presentment of a simpering maiden with long hair and enormous eyes thickly fringed with realistic eyelashes, and a cupid's-bow mouth. To this day I do not know whether it was honest admiration that moved her, or the beginnings of a marked partiality, or a flattered suspicion that the maiden was herself. In any case, she warmed my soul with exclamatory praise and I loved her all the more profoundly.

So from that time onward my artistic endeavors were given over almost altogether to portraiture, and libellous misrepresentations of Lady Mary Borrow lay thick about house and garden—as thick as fallen leaves in Vallombrosa (or in Blandford). My dear mother must have gathered some of them up, for, many years afterward, I came upon a heap of them in her writing-desk labelled "Willie's sketches of Mary, 1882." Under her writing my Uncle George had added, later on, "Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit"—Never were truer words. . . . And the ink was brown with time and the sheets of paper had begun to turn yellow.

How it brought back those happy days! "Le vert paradis des amours enfantines."

I had voiced to Henry Trent so much gloomy prophecy

about our English visitors that I began to be afraid I had filled him with a prejudice that nothing could alter, but I reckoned without Mary Borrow. He joined us that first afternoon and the two "took to" each other with immediate enthusiasm—with too much enthusiasm, altogether, I thought, and, for the first time in my life, I knew the pangs of jealousy and wished that Henry were safe away with his mysterious aunt in Rhode Island. But the pangs were intermittent and never very severe, and we three had memorable play-times together.

To be quite honest about it, I don't think little Lady Mary was quite an equal success with the other youth of Blandford. They held her in suspicion, and remained somewhat aloof even when they came to play with us, but that may have been because she so frankly preferred Henry Trent and me and, as for the other little girls, ignored them altogether. She had rather queenly instincts and wasn't going to put up with anything like rivalry from her own sex. So our village friends sniffed apart and criticised Mary's sensibly plain clothes and made rude remarks about her lovely crisp English speech which I adored and tried to imitate. I found it necessary to fight two boys on her behalf, all in one day, and came off victorious but with honorable wounds, which my mother's quick eye (that I had been dreading) observed. Hugely to my delight she was not pained at all—save with sympathy—and told me that I was always to fight, when it was necessary, in defence of a lady or of any kind of an underdog (only she didn't phrase it quite like that), and that she was proud of me and loved me all the more for what I'd done.

It was a tremendous relief, and I went swaggering about for days, looking very fierce and valiant and terrifying.

But I had no more battles to undertake on Mary's account. The two had been enough.

Henry developed what seemed to Mary and me a marvellous talent for fiction, and we spent breathlessly admiring hours sitting at his feet under a certain apple-tree or up in the aged cherry, while he told fairy stories of unprecedented ingenuity and delectable allurement.

You will remember that at this time neither I nor any one —save his mother—had the least idea that he was "different."

I send my memory back with an effort that is painful in its anxiety to rescue from those hours something tangible—something of the real essence of the boy's imaginings or visions—to put now into words. But it was too long ago and the thing too frail and vague and mistlike. Perhaps—I am not sure—perhaps in its essentials, its framework, it was no more marvellous than the fairy tales of Grimm or Andersen. I rather think nothing could be more marvellous. But I know that his fragmentary and ill-constructed yarns had some elusive quality that no printed story has ever possessed, and I know that both Mary Borrow and I recognized it. Perhaps the quality was Truth. Again I confess that I don't know.

And, after all, mere strangeness, mere difference from ordinary human experience, isn't worth very much even to a child's mind (perhaps to the child's mind least of all). I could invent quite easily, here and now, a series of happenings as strange as anything ever related, by merely suspending, for the story's sake, some force of nature—like the force of gravity. Or I could tell about a man who had eyes in the soles of his feet, and slept habitually upon his left ear, with his legs waving in the breeze. That would be strange, but it would fascinate no one.

We painters and illustrators have been for years depicting women much more completely and perfectly beautiful than any living woman ever was or ever will be, and we are glad of your languid praise of our efforts. Yet the mysterious living charm of a woman not half so lovely as the ladies we have drawn or painted means more to your hearts and souls than all the Amazonian ranks of canvas or marble or bronze that ever were.

And this surprising burst of eloquence is just a little argument that I have been making to myself in a futile effort to discover why Henry Trent's fairy stories so charmed Mary and me, when doubtless we had read many finer ones in books.

They must have carried with them a strange conviction that somehow they were *true*.

I can see the three of us sitting together on the grass under that gnarled apple-tree, Henry Trent with his head laid back against the rough bark, and his face a little pale—as it always was at these times—and his big dark eyes fixed upon something above and beyond our heads. I remember how, after the first or second time, he began, somewhat shyly, to bring into the stories a delightful little girl with whom Mary and I fell promptly in love, and her name was Gray Eyes. As I have said, Henry was at first rather timid and hesitating and shamefaced about her, but spontaneous success seemed to hearten him so that presently she was a very important figure indeed in the picture, and every one and everything else began to revolve round her.

Of course it wasn't until years afterward that I realized how Gray Eyes had been brought out of the closet of disgrace and well-nigh oblivion, and with what transports of joy Henry must have thrilled over her rehabilitation.

But Mary Borrow was ever a practical soul and liked things made visual. I can hear her crisp, sharp, childish voice breaking in upon Henry's narrative.

"Oh, la, la! Mais que c'est charmant! Et maintenant, dessine moi ça, Willie, Gray Eyes montée à cheval sur un rayon de soleil." And so the story would halt while I drew Gray Eyes arriving in the midst of a fairy landscape, as per description, astride a sunbeam.

A difficult problem, perhaps, for an artist of seven years, but without terrors to me. And, strangely enough, my picture would give complete satisfaction to all present except Henry, who would sigh patiently and shake his head over it.

I tried more than once to get out of him something like a detailed description of his young friend to work by. But he was vague.

"Oh, she's got brown hair," he would say, and big eyes, and her nose turns up just a little bit, and—and—I don't know." Which, of course, was not of much use to even the most willing of illustrators, especially as Lady Mary herself had brown hair—almost black except in the sunlight—and big eyes and a nose turned up just a little bit.

I was always being called upon to illustrate Henry's tales, and, first and last, must have turned out a prodigious quantity of sketches — some of them adorned with colored chalks.

I wish I had them now. They must have been very funny indeed.

Days of enchantment those were for me. I treasured every golden hour of them, and I look back upon them now with tears in my eyes—tears of retrospective delight and of sorrow because, having so long ago eaten my cake, I can't have it again.

I hope the two visitors enjoyed themselves as much as I. Mary did, I know, and made no secret of it. And her ladyship, as well, was always professing herself enchanted (but that was a way she had—a habit with her). She found a Connecticut village so curiously different from anything she had ever before known. For, of course, she was used to English country life where the gentry lived far apart in great, stately houses surrounded by their many acres, and where the villages were inhabited by very humble folk indeed. She was hugely intrigued by finding that the people who inhabited the square, white-painted, green-shuttered, comfortable houses along Main Street and Myrtle Street and King James Street were, without question, gentle folk of good birth and refinement and education, despite their simple habit of life, and had quite astonishing ancestry, some of them, upon which they dwelt rather more than Lady Crail thought in quite—quite good taste. And they amused her very much by making mistakes about her title, and by calling Lady Mary "Miss Crail" or "Miss Mary"—for they couldn't understand why mother and daughter should have different names, and decided finally that her ladyship must have married twice. But she had not the least smallest spark of snobbishness about her, Lady Crail hadn't, and was amused by these blunders only in the most good-natured way, and admired very much indeed the quiet, unworldly dignity of the Blandford people, and wished there was more of it elsewhere.

As for her admiration of my mother that was beyond all bounds. She thought her quite the loveliest woman she had ever seen, and begged her, with tears in her eyes, to come to England in the course of the next spring or the next after that or any spring at all—or autumn or winter—promising

her a season of triumph in London. I may say that my beautiful mother, while touched and pleased by this—as who wouldn't be?—laughed at the idea, for she had little taste for society—though I believe a true talent for it—and loved the uneventful quiet of Blandford and hated New York.

III

THE day before that dark day on which our visitors left us we went for a picnic to a certain wild and romantic glen, a few miles from the village, which was called, for some obscure reason, "The Gulf." We drove there in a long, canopy-topped wagon of six seats, my Uncle George, in a high white hat, driving, with Henry Trent and me at either side of him, on the raised front seat, and Mary squeezed in among us. Behind were my mother and her ladyship and Henry's mother and the Fordyces and Aunt Martha Mainwaring and old Doctor Squiers with his ear-trumpet, and, lastly, a strange being, a guest of the Fordyces, who was an æsthete (Mr. Oscar Wilde was in the midst of his proselytizing tour just then), and he wore long hair and a velvet jacket and a waterfall tie and tight knickerbockers, and he was rather gaunt and pale green and talked about Beauty to my beautiful mother and almost made her ill. But Lady Crail was enchanted with him, for she had just the least drop of occasional malice at the bottom of a well of sweetness, and she led him on to say and do intolerably foolish things, and laughed in his face for them. My Uncle George wouldn't speak to the æsthete at all. He called him "that damn play-actor," and growled about him under his breath, like a dog, all the way out through the leafy streets of the village until we had come into the open country road. Then he cheered up and cocked the high white hat a bit to one side, puffing out

his chest slightly, and said the two sleek, sedate steeds from T. Cronin's Livery, Boarding, and Sale Stables were a "spanking fine pair."

It was the first time I had heard that expression. At first it intrigued me vastly, for I couldn't see where the "spanking" applied (no more do I now, for that matter), and then won my heart. I used the adjective about everything for a long while until once I said Janet Fordyce was a "spanking fine girl," before my mother, who was horrified and read me a lecture on the English tongue.

He presently let Henry and me hold a rein each, who resigned them both to Mary Borrow, while he lighted a cigar and leaned back in his place and sang delightfully—in spite of the obstruction—one of Messrs. Harrigan and Hart's justly popular songs. But he kept a careful eye open for all that, and lent a guiding hand when there were turns to negotiate, and so we came in safety to the edge of the woods where we were to detrain.

In my time (as my Uncle George would say) I have been to many picnics, some of them very rowdy indeed—and they were great fun—and some so grand and luxurious that they were rather like state banquets to visiting royalty, and one looked up for the dining-room chandelier and was astonished to see the sky instead. But all of these pale in my memory and give place to the picnic we had at the Gulf on that memorable day so long ago.

In the first place there was no dreary formality about it. We hadn't brought a servant of any kind, not even a boy to look after the horses—my Uncle George did that, with his coat off and the high white hat pushed to the back of his head. And there were no thermos bottles then or other such Decadent-Roman luxuries, but a dozen great hampers which

we dragged down the steep bank of the glen, and an ice-cream freezer so heavy that a sort of sledge of boughs had to be contrived to move it at all (and they moved it so fast that the top came off, but no salt got into the precious contents, thank heaven!).

I wish I had words to describe to you the lovely and poetic and almost eerie beauty of that charming ravine, but I haven't. You must go and look for yourselves—for I believe it is still there—and even picnic in it, if you like. I wish you'd invite me!

The upper end of it is narrow, with very high, steep, wooded banks—except where they are precipitous walls of mossy, dripping limestone where little red flowers grow in clusters. And there is a spring that bubbles up among the rocks and gives birth to a tiny brooklet with brown pools lower down. And white birches grow there, and tall, slim alders, like slender columns in a church, and the sunlight comes filtering down through their leaves and shivers on the thick turf by the brook-side. And there is no underbrush because the place is so dim, but fern-brakes and great thick beds of moss, and, in early summer, wood violets in thousands.

And the air is always cool and fresh, however hot the day up above in the world.

We made a great fire of green birch bark (the best kindling there is) and broken boughs of dead trees, and Henry and I roasted apples at the ends of sticks, and even tried to roast an orange to see what it would taste like—it was very nasty indeed. And, when the fire had burned down to red embers, Mrs. Fordyce brewed a big pot of her justly famous coffee, clarifying it with egg-shells, a performance that astonished me beyond speech. That was all the fire had to

do, for the other things, as befitted a warm summer's day (but deliciously cool in that deep, dim glen), were to be eaten cold.

We took them out of the hampers and set them about on a white cloth by the brook-side. I can see them now, and I wish they might come back into the world across a quarter of a century of years—a whole dozen of little roasted chickens, lying on their little backs, all brown and golden and redolent, as only roasted chickens can be, and tender and appetizing. They seemed to be uttering a silent prayer to be eaten—and never was prayer more promptly or more literally answered.

And there was a truffled chaud-froid of volaille quivering inside its amber oblong of jelly, and a veal-loaf contributed by Henry Trent's mother. My Uncle George wept tears of delight over this and ate more of it than I should like to say. And there were potted tongue and potted ham and the thinnest of sandwiches, both brown and white, with all manner of delicious, mysterious substances in their insides (Neufchatel cheese with bits of nut, or lettuce and mayonnaise, or slices of cucumber—I daren't go on).

And after these delectable things had been disposed of, there was the ice-cream from the big freezer; it was flavored with sherry and had pounded-up macaroons all through it. And with it what cakes! What unforgettable, immortal, heavenly masterpieces of the good housewife's art! They are unknown outside this land of ours. There are cakes in England, in France, in Germany, in Italy, but if they are cakes then some new and magnificent word must be invented to distinguish from all such stodgy or frivolous concoctions the great layer cake which used to be—I hope and pray still is—the pride of the good housewife's heart—the rock (nay!

the dream) upon which is shipwrecked the incompetent—the bone of village contention, of jealousy, of strife.

Had Lucullus and his friends known the New England layer cake in its richness and variety, they had died happier: perhaps earlier, too—but they wouldn't have minded that—a price worth paying for such a treasure.

My spirit faints with retrospective delight as I remember how Aunt Martha Mainwaring's cocoanut cake (famed far and wide) was brought forth from the hamper and set reverently, in all its snowy loveliness, upon the centre of the cleared cloth. Eighteen inches across, ten inches, I should think, high. Five layers of pale-golden sweetness and light! and between the layers what a deep and creamy richness of the palm-tree's gift—as foamy as froth, as sweet as honey, as delicate as dream-ambrosia when the gods are dozing on Olympus before dinner.

I shut my eyes (like the gods) and a great wedge of that cocoanut cake is crumbling in my hand. I open them and it is gone.

But that was not all. There was a chocolate cake of Mrs. Fordyce's—words fail me utterly before it. I bow my head and pass on; a cream-and-nut cake made by Henry Trent's mother; and a pound cake made by I don't know who.

You observe that my mother's name is not entered upon this list of honor. Alas! I have a vague belief that she couldn't cook, and so never quite won the true respect of the matrons of Blandford. But it was no tragedy to her. She didn't care. You see she was, after all, only a summer sojourner in the village, and I suppose that explains it. If she had really lived there she would have had to make something—a cake, or a jelly, or a mince-pie, or quince preserves

—of outstanding merit or lose her social position altogether.

In defence of her good name I will, however, set down here that she made a claret cup at that picnic—a ruby mixture of many ingredients, but smelling chiefly of mint, in a tall glass jug. My Uncle George bowed to her over his glass of it and said:

"My dear, I couldn't have equalled it myself!" And that was very high praise.

I could mention nuts and raisins and candies and little sweetmeats of all conceivable kinds which came at the end of this memorable feast, but I am feeling rather replete after such a meal, and they seem to me trivial and unimportant and a little flat and almost impertinent (but I shall long for them to-morrow when they can't be had).

And when the meal was at last over we sat about on the grass and sighed and said how good everything had been. Activity of any sort was abhorrent. It couldn't be thought of—not even clearing away the débris and the dishes. But my mother, who had eaten very little (throughout her life she existed like a humming-bird, seemingly on flowers and sunshine—and they seemed to nourish her), got out her guitar from its green-cloth cover and tuned it and nursed it in her lap, leaning back, with her beautiful golden head against a birch-tree, and sang lovely little songs of sugary sentiment and pathos—"In the Gloaming" and "Sweet Dreamland Faces" and the "Bid Me Good-bye and Go," of Signor Paolo Tosti, and, last and best, "L'HeureExquise," of Verlaine, to a musical setting of her own. They were all songs that should have been—and usually were—sung in twilight or in the dark, but my mother didn't need extrane-

ous aids when she sang—she made her own atmosphere round her.

"Un vaste et tendre
Apaisement Calm
Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l' astre irise . . .

"C'est l'heure exquise."

Then when she had finished and had laughed at our sober, sentimental faces, and so broken the spell we were under, the æsthete asked her if she would play some sort of a jig, and he rose to his feet—he hadn't eaten much, either, for his cult forbade it—and, to everybody's unbounded astonishment and delight, performed the funniest dance or series of dances we had ever seen in our lives, in which he was by turns all manner of beast and fowl, and emitted unreproducible sounds, and made us laugh until we ached. It seems he had learned it years before in the Latin Quarter of Paris. We shall meet him again there, later on, and find that he isn't such a bad sort after all, in spite of his attire and his æsthetic manner and his talk about Beauty.

Indeed, my Uncle George forgave him on the spot, and laughed harder than any one.

I forgot to say that his name was Jellaby.

Then, after much urging, and rather unwillingly because she had lunched like an anaconda and was naturally torpid after it, little Mary Borrow danced a Highland Fling with spirit and grace and precision, and was wildly applauded, but wouldn't give an encore.

I made a picture of her doing it and presented it to her,

but the wind blew it away and drowned it in the brook. Mary was inconsolable.

And after that my Uncle George was made to tell one of his endless store of tales, and told it, as always, capitally. These stories of his professed to be adventures that had befallen him during his travels, but they were so fantastic and incredible that no one ever even pretended to think they were true, and my uncle didn't in the least care. Oddly enough, I found long afterward that most of these wild happenings were as true as gospel—accurate in even the smallest detail; indeed, that he hadn't told half the funny and preposterous things he might have told. Maybe they were too funny.

Then Mary begged Henry Trent to tell us a fairy story, but Henry said he didn't know any, and gave a quick, frightened look at his mother, and his face was quite white.

Mary had begun an amused protest—"Oh, la, la! Quel farceur!"—but she caught that odd look of his (I did, too) and stopped short, wondering what it was all about.

Afterward we four children wandered away from the others and set ourselves to exploring the upper end of the glen, which was a mere narrowing cleft in the earth, walled by cliffs of rock, stained and mossy and always dripping with water. It was almost dark there and very mysterious and enchanting. One could imagine all kinds of delightful and legendary things. We clambered over great bowlders that lay huddled about as if giants had pitched them there, and found a shallow cavern in the wall of rock, hung across by a veil of dripping water. But just as we were about to occupy it little Janet Fordyce slipped on the damp moss and hurt her elbow against a rock. So we had to take her back to Doctor Squiers to be repaired. The old gentleman

always went prepared for emergencies, and soon had Janet's arm bound up with adhesive plaster and a white bandage, of which she was revoltingly proud and held that arm out before her all the rest of the day, and was hardly fit to speak to.

It was near evening by this time and we decided to stay on and make a supper upon the plentiful débris of that Homeric feast, and drive home by moonlight. An excellent thought—it came from Aunt Martha Mainwaring, of all people!

I'm afraid the heaps of débris were not greatly diminished. No one seemed to have much appetite. But I dimly remember devouring an astonishing quantity of half-melted ice-cream and cocoanut cake and chocolate cake and nut-and-cream cake and pound cake and raisins.

Some one had to save the day.

The breaking camp and the embarkation upon the canopy-topped, six-seated wagon were great fun. It was quite dark, and we worked by the light of flaring torches of birch-bark —a most eerie scene. It was like The Brigands' Retreat, or Pirates-Removing-Their-Treasure-by-Night, or something of that sort. Janet Fordyce became frightened and cried and had to be comforted by her mother.

So at last under a young golden moon we started back toward the village, the spanking fine team from T. Cronin's Livery, Boarding, and Sale Stables very fresh indeed for the first mile or so, and nearly pulling my Uncle George's arms out by the roots. He said so himself.

There was the cool, fresh smell of summer night against our faces, the woods to either side of the white road were very gloomy and mysterious—fireflies swarming above the meadows—dogs barking far away. An enchanting drive.

We sang. Everybody does at such a time. We sang

"Good-night, Ladies," with my Uncle George's voice leading, strong and sure and mellow and rich; and old Doctor Squiers tried to join in, but his idea of the bass part was to sing four notes very high and then four notes very low, regardless of the rules of harmony, and to keep this up forever. So he wasn't much help, but he meant well, and nobody had the heart to stop him.

Mary sat where she had sat before, squeezed in between my Uncle George and me, and we held hands all the way in a sort of vague, dumb sentimentality because this was the last of our beautiful fortnight and we had no words to say how sorry we were.

Then all at once, before it seemed at all possible, we were rattling over the village streets and were at home and the day was over.

And on the next morning two sober, woe-begone little boys stood beside my mother and my Uncle George on the platform of the railway station and watched a train disappear into the landscape.

Mary had left me a lock of her hair tied with brown ribbon. I kept it forever. I have it now and my wife doesn't mind in the least, for she's something of a sentimentalist herself and wears a ring that a little boy once carved out of a black bone button and put on her finger. Luckily it was too large then, for now it fits, and she never takes it off—or so I am told.

So our English visitors left Blandford behind them with its good and simple folk and its green-arched streets and white houses and gardens and old-fashioned ways; left my lovely mother and my Uncle George, so gallant and tender-hearted, and the two little boys who grieved sorely at the parting. And so must we also leave that pleasant village—

and childhood with it—for Blandford and Blandford days are only a sort of introduction to this veracious history. They had to be mentioned and dwelt upon a little, for, after all, there must be introductions in the polite society to which you and I are accustomed, and if I have hung too long over the ceremony it was in sheer self-indulgence. The long look backward has been delightful to me.

We shall get on faster now.

I have been reading over what I have written and I am appalled to find so little of Henry Trent and so much of myself and my affairs. I find only a dim impression of an odd little boy who was rather lonely and solemn, and knew unusual things about a certain private fairy-land of his own, and had a girl friend there.

Well, that is all I know of him at that stage of his life. That is the impression of him which I find in my memory as well as in these pages. So what more could I do?

For the intrusion of myself and my family and my friends I apologize. I shall try to do better from now on. But I make no promises. Yes!—one. Wait just a little while longer. Wait until we've arrived in Paris. Then there will be enough about Henry—all you could ask, and perhaps more.

IV

FRESH from the shock of discovering how very little I have been able to tell about Henry Trent in the introductory part of this chronicle, I am determined to be firm with myself (a garrulous soul, as you have observed) and to cover the stretch of the succeeding ten or fifteen years by a rapid series of leaps and bounds.

I am as anxious as you are to get on to Paris, for it is there that my friend comes at last into the full light so that I can sit comfortably down and strive to accomplish that task the Bart. has laid upon me.

Paris! The very sound of the name is music to me. Let's hurry on toward those happy Elysian fields. When we have reached them we'll click the gate behind us and draw a long breath and have, I hope, a very good time indeed.

If we don't have it will be all my fault.

I am conscious of a vague surprise that the early years of my life in New York should have left so dim an impression with me. I suppose it is because, in looking backward, I connect my pleasures with Blandford and my tasks with town. For you see we spent only the winters there and sometimes even went to the country for Christmas.

I continued until I was eighteen to attend the excellent school of Mr. Charles Augustus Howell in Thirty-sixth Street, but what I was forced to acquire there (or suffer penalties) interested me much less than the priceless matters

I learned from one M. Anatole Cuvier, a drawing-master, who was engaged for me in the autumn of my eighth year and who continued to guide my erring pencil for many a winter after that. And I still believe him to have been a man among a thousand. He taught me fascinating truths about this wonderfulest of worlds, and yet he never painted a good picture in all his earnest, frugal, hopeful, self-sacrificing life. He could draw like Leonardo, like Veronese, like Rubens: faultlessly. He knew the true shapes of every thing there is in every posture, in every light, from every point of view. He could draw them by night or day, he could draw them with his eyes shut. But, alas! the little necessary something, the spark, the pinhead of gray matter that makes for creation had been left out of him. Create, he couldn't. And so his hair was streaked with white, and his lean face had long, hopeless lines in it, and his eyes were tired, and he taught young ladies how to paint in water-colors.

We invited him one summer to come with us to Blandford, and he came and was quite touchingly happy. He was always weeping with gratitude about it and kissing my dear mother's hand and trying to find ways of serving her. He would gladly have been skinned alive and made a mat of for her little feet to rest upon. He told me so.

I owe a great deal to poor M. Anatole. It was he who pointed out to me when I was all for finding ancient mills and crumbling ruins and other melodramatic things to reproduce, that there was nothing in the world more mysteriously beautiful or more worthy of prolonged study than the blue and white vase on the library mantel-shelf or any other vase, or any chair, or any tree, or especially any living human being with his magnificent framework of bones and

his cunningly devised muscles that showed so plain through the skin, if only you looked to see. M. Anatole made me turn my eyes upon the things nearest at hand, and for that I owe him more than I could ever possibly repay.

Unless, perhaps, he is looking on from whatever world he now inhabits, and sees that I have made, in my humble way, good use of what he taught me, and have come to some celebrity through it. Perhaps seeing that, he feels repaid. From the bottom of my heart I hope so.

So, swiftly and imperceptibly and unadventurously, I grew up from a little boy into a big one and so (strangely enough) did Henry Trent. I continued to spend every summer with him, from May to October; twice he came to us in town for Christmastide and once or twice we went to Blandford for that cheerful season. It was much more delightful there. Even Henry, unused to the city, and, so you would think, likely to be entranced by it, preferred his village home.

As he got older he grew even more self-contained and silent than he had been as a child: self-defence I think, a sort of turtle-shell that he withdrew into against the well-meant attacks of his mother. And he continued to be very handsome. I think his personal beauty increased, if anything, so that, at fifteen, he looked like a romantic young man with a secret sorrow, and strangers (in town, of course—there were none in Blandford) asked who was that beautiful youth, and young ladies began to sigh over him.

First and last what a lot of breath was expended in the form of sighs over Henry Trent! (He was quite unconscious of it for the most part.)

Did I, or did I not, make any attempt at describing him as a child? I must look back and see. Anyhow, at fifteen or thereabout he was a tall, rather slight lad with waving

black hair that wouldn't be kept down flat however much he wet it or however hard he brushed, and a skin so dark and golden that he might have been a Spaniard or an Italian. He had a beautifully modelled nose of the kind that is called aquiline, and a mouth that showed he couldn't be stern, not if he tried ever so, but a chin under it that stuck out and seemed quite firm—and he *was* firm about most things. But the feature that did the most for him, among the ladies, was his eyes, which were almost too large for a boy and dark-blue in color—the darkest blue I ever saw. And the skin under them was deep brown, as it often is in Latin people.

I fancy it was the unexpected presence of those blue eyes in a dark face that made people stare at him so.

"He's quite the handsomest *dark* boy I ever saw," my mother said once, and two or three people who were there looked across at me and laughed very hard, and my mother turned pink and I turned red and wished I could get out of the room.

Ah, well, why shouldn't one's own mother be partial? I adored her for it all the while I was suffering those agonies of embarrassment. She was, far and away, the loveliest being of my acquaintance. She must have known how beautiful she was, and I dare say she was glad I happened to be fair like herself. The rest of it was mother-love, and that is the sweetest emotion in this world, even if it isn't very reliable as sober criticism.

A fact significant enough now, but at that time meaningless, comes back to me about Henry. It is the curious willingness—eagerness, I might well say—that he showed, for a shy and uncommunicative youth, to accept the invitations I got for him to attend such boy-and-girl parties as chanced

to occur during his visits in town. In a general way he hated being with a lot of people, and was lonely by inclination, but he was always ready to go where there was to be a lot of little girls. And yet when he got there and had seen them all and danced with most of them he seemed to tire of it. Long before the brief evening was over he was ready to go home in spite of the fact that he had a great success.

Little girls of fifteen or thereabout are far more precocious in the tender affections than boys of the same age, and many a sweet and charming maiden, with her hair down her back, felt untimely flutterings of the heart as she sat beside Henry Trent and met the politely deferential gaze of those dark-blue eyes, and wondered if they really meant all the unutterable romantic things they seemed to be trying to say. What a dreadful blow it would have been if these innocent souls could have known that behind the soft and melancholy gaze the young Don Juan (malgré lui) was wondering if he dared slip away home before supper—or perhaps immediately after, for his appetite was usually awake and crying, if his gallantry wasn't.

But, indeed, his conquests weren't altogether among the immature and unsophisticated. I recall the case of one soulful lady whose hair hadn't been down her back—in public, at least—for a good many years, but who had him to call at her house and read strange poetry to him and talked about how there was no such thing as youth or age when two hearts were in accord. He was sixteen, I believe, at this time. But a naïve remark of Henry's gave the lady away to my mother, and a definite stop was put to that sort of thing.

All this time I was drawing, drawing, drawing with an industry that never flagged, under the eye of the good M.

Anatole; and, under the eyes of Mr. Charles Augustus Howell and assistants, suffering, with an industry that flagged piteously and often, instruction in those subjects which are believed to provide the foundation for a polite education. I learned more or less about English literature and something of German grammar; I almost welcomed the early stages of Latin and Greek; I was made to admit, even if I couldn't understand, that the sum of the internal angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles, and other revolting facts that have to do with tortured and suffering numbers. I have forgotten them all long since, and I thank heaven for it. Mathematics of every dreadful and incomprehensible kind was for years a hideous nightmare to me, and even now I dream that I am to be examined in it and awake shivering.

I prefer to remember out of this epoch how I used to drive with my dear mother in the Park or walk with her in upper Fifth Avenue, and what thrills of joy and pride came to me when passers-by followed her with admiring eyes. And I like to remember how she or my Uncle George or both took me to see "Esmeralda" with Miss Annie Russell in it (that must have been in '82, I think), and the beautiful Helen Dauvray in "One of Our Girls" (Mr. Sothern was in that play, too—a new find!), and the Daly farces, such as "Seven-Twenty-Eight" and "Dollars and Sense" and "A Night Off." And I shall never forget Mr. Henry Irving's début in "The Bells." It gave me horrible dreams for weeks—and so it did to my mother, and she wouldn't let me see Mr. Irving again until I was much older. Also I saw the lovely Miss Mary Anderson in "Galatea" and other plays, and fell hopelessly in love with her—but everybody else did, too, and so my passion never disturbed her at all. She was used to it.

Indeed, as I look back upon this period of my life, I seem to have had a whole procession of not very desperate love affairs (not counting Miss Dauvray or Miss Mary Anderson or the magnificent Mrs. Langtry at all, because these ladies were, at the most, angelic beings of another world at whom one gazed through an opera-glass and worshipped from afar, and never even dreamed of actually meeting on common ground. They were stars in a double sense, not women). I remember a whole throng of lovely maidens of my own sphere—a phalanx, a battalion whose eyes and curls and shy, alluring smiles wrought terrible havoc upon the fortress of my allegiance to little unforgettable Mary Borrow, and shook it upon its foundations, but never, I state with pride, never quite overturned it: the British flag, a little tattered and torn, continued to snap gayly in the breeze.

There was my little cousin, Naïla Castle, who, with her elder sister Marian, came now and then to visit us, and was so deliciously pretty and so clever and amusing and made such delightful music (she could play on the piano and sing charmingly) that I never wanted her to go away. But I didn't care much for Marian, who was an odd, silent, brooding girl, awkward at play and passionately jealous of anybody who came near Naïla, whom she adored and was a sort of combined mother and maiden aunt to. These poor children had a sad life of it, for they had lost their mother just after Naïla's birth, and their father, my paternal uncle, was a hopeless victim of tuberculosis of the lungs, and dragged out a miserable existence in sanitaria and such places.

Then there was Miss Evelyn Annesley, whose name seemed to me so romantic and beautiful (much lovelier, alas! than plain "Lady Mary Borrow"). Miss Evelyn and I at the mature age of ten or twelve (I forget which) had quite

a protracted period of sighs and glances and exchanged keepsakes, and her eyes were so big and gray and solemn and mysterious and unfathomable, that I wished Henry could know her—she was so like the heroine of his fairy stories—but, on second thoughts, didn't wish it at all, for I was sure of being cut out.

I believe they never met.

The two Castle girls came, for the last time, to make us a brief visit in my sixteenth year. They were on their way to Leipsic, where Naïla was to study singing, for her voice had turned out to be quite wonderfully promising. Their father —my uncle, whom I had never seen—had gone to Arizona to make a final stand against his ancient enemy. He didn't expect to live much longer, and had refused to allow his daughters to be with him during the last stages of his life. He wouldn't have them tied to a walking corpse, he said, and so sent them away abroad knowing quite well, I fancy, that he should never see them again.

I almost wished that I hadn't had to see them at this time, for poor Naïla, partly through a natural but increasing frailty of body, and partly, I fancy, through grief over her father, was quite sadly altered. She had grown much thinner and had lost what little color she had ever possessed, from her cheeks. She was still very pretty—beautiful, my mother thought—but it was a frail, delicate, flower-like beauty that made one sad to look at. My mother said Naïla was exactly like Dante Gabriel Rossetti's lovely ladies—the "Blessed Damozel" leaning out from the gold bar of heaven, or the "Donna della Finestra." And so she was, but thinner. She had their exquisite mouth, I know.

Marian had changed very little—"the same, but more so" —as my Uncle George said. And she was so fiercely jealous

that she couldn't bear to have any one do Naïla even the littlest service that she herself could possibly render. Such sisterly love I have never seen either before or since. She hadn't a thought or a care in the world save for Naïla—and least of all for herself. She wouldn't even bother to get pretty clothes or to find a becoming fashion for her hair, and the result was that she gave the impression of being plain, when she needn't have been, at all, for she had good enough features. My mother once said that if Marian would take a little pains with herself she might be almost a beauty.

Naïla had been having some trouble with her eyes, which got easily tired and ached at night. We wanted her to consult an oculist before sailing, but she didn't think it serious enough for that, and Marian, for no other reason, I believe, than that the suggestion hadn't come from herself, belittled the difficulty, too, and nothing was done.

If we only could have foreseen!

V

I WAS to go abroad in March and to spend the months between that time and September travelling about Europe with a tutor who should be, in one person, guide, philosopher, friend, and instructor—who should, in brief, show me the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome, the while he kept me fresh on my Greek and Latin (not to forget the mathematics). In September I was to return, undergo my final examinations for college matriculation (the preliminary ones had already been passed), and take up my residence in the university town.

The prime cause for all this was a discovery on my dear mother's part that I was not looking quite well—a manifest absurdity, for I had the strength of a young bull, the appetite of an ostrich or a puppy, and slept like all of the Seven Sleepers rolled into one. I may say, however, that I urged none of these palpable facts, but, indeed, tried to look wan and listless and pale, and got laughed at by my Uucle George.

The guide, philosopher, friend, and schoolmaster was duly found (by Mr. Charles Augustus Howell)—a middle-aged Englishman of Harrow and Balliol, and of travelling experience, too; and, after I will not say what fond and lingering farewells, we set off upon that ill-fated journey.

I would give years out of my life now to have back again those few paltry months and to spend them, not in wander-

ings, but by my mother's side. Alas, how differently we would all have ordered certain epochs in our lives if we'd only known!

When I think what it must have cost her to let me go . . . I was her life, all the world to her, the breath in her nostrils, the sunlight before her beautiful eyes. . . . And I went away.

It comes back to me with an intolerable bitterness how we sat together in a dim light that last evening and she held my head against her breast as she'd used to do when I was a child; and how, later on, I begged her to sing and she went to the piano and her fingers trembled on the keys, and she tried to sing "Sur le Pont d'Avignon," and choked over it and couldn't go on. . . .

I shall say not so much as one word about that European journey of pleasure and instruction. The thought of it is hideous to me.

I was in London in July when the first bad news came, and on the eve of going down to the Crails in Oxfordshire where I was to see Mary once more after ten years. It was a letter from my Uncle George, in Blandford, who said that my dear and beautiful mother had been stricken ill with typhoid fever and that doctors and nurses had been got down from town, but they said it was a mild case and not to worry.

I was in the very act of reading this letter when a cablegram was brought to me.

My mother had died very suddenly of heart failure.

There was a ship sailing that night from Liverpool. I left everything at loose ends and managed to get on board just in the nick of time.

What endless, dragging days! What interminable, intolerable nights that were but the background upon which I

saw processions of pictures of all the thoughtless or selfish or untender things I had ever done—the word spoken or the caress withheld.

It was my first grief, and I was alone with it. It tore me through and through. For the first time in my life I came face to face with the seemingly wanton brutality of fate, and raged against it, and would not rest, and cursed God who is so used to curses, and, alone in the bitter night, asked that great question which goes wailing down the ages from so many tortured lips—a gigantic chorus against which I should think God must wish He could stop His ears:

"Why? Why? Why?"

My Uncle George, looking bent and white and ten years older, met me at the steamer's landing and we drove straight to a train and went that same day to Blandford.

The new grave in the green, ancient churchyard, with the turf not yet rooted above, and the white, staring headstone! I ran from it in a panic. The sight was unbearable.

But what a prop to lean upon—my Uncle George! What a comfort the silent, sympathetic presence of Henry Trent, the tender, kindly Blandford folk! I shall never forget.

And it seems she never knew that she was going to die, my dear mother, never even believed herself seriously ill—as, indeed, she hadn't been until that sudden heart attack. It came and was over in a flash. Thank God for so much mercy! And when my time comes may I go as swiftly. I was immeasurably glad she never knew. I couldn't have borne it that that sweet and gay spirit, so in love with life, should have had to lie for days looking forward to life's end.

A moment's sharp pain—no more than she had suffered a dozen times in her life—not so bad as when the window

fell on her finger and almost crushed the bone of it—a single moment and it was over.

But oh, loveliest and tenderest of all beautiful mothers, the difference to me!

In September Henry Trent and I struggled through our final series of examinations for college matriculation and passed them (even I the loathed and dreaded mathematics! Horresco referens). And so began a pleasant, quiet four years' period upon which I look back with enjoyment, but which I don't mean to talk about here—save one very important thing, and that is how, by the sheerest accident that ever was, Henry began his earliest childish and laborious efforts to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.

So started that momentous career.

It came about in the oddest and, to me, the most exciting fashion, and I remember the circumstances as well as if they had occurred this very day.

We'd been for a long walk one afternoon, out round a certain lake, and, toward dusk, were returning. Not far from home we overhauled a troop of boarding-school misses walking two by two with a she-dragon behind to see that they came to no harm. There were, perhaps, a dozen of them, anywhere from ten to sixteen years old. And as we came alongside the line and passed it, Henry, holding to my arm, turned and stared quite deliberately into the faces of those little girls, one by one. I was rather disgusted with him and called him names.

"Cradle robber! Vilain mangeur de cœurs d'enfants, que tu es! Shame on you! Why don't you take somebody of your size?" He gave a sort of growl, but I wouldn't let him off, for I began to remember other instances when I'd

caught him staring at little girls in the street or in trains or in shops—anywhere at all.

"Look here!" said I. "You've got to stop this kind of thing. You're always doing it. What the deuce do you think you're about? You behave like a cheap street-corner loafer on a holiday." He growled again and said I was talking rubbish. He demanded to know if I'd ever seen him grin at a girl he didn't know, or speak to one, or try to attract her attention. I hadn't and I admitted it.

"What *are* you after, then?" I asked him. "Anybody'd say you were looking for some one"—and Henry Trent turned his head away and said:

"Perhaps I am."

He said it in such an odd voice that I stared at him and, after a few steps, asked:

"Whom?"

He stopped dead in the street and pulled his arm out of mine, and I could see that he was in an unusual state of excitement. He made as if he would speak, but the words wouldn't come, and after he had swallowed and tried again he caught my arm once more and said:

"Wait till we get home. I can't talk here," and began to pull me along at a great pace. Neither of us said anything more all the rest of the way.

We had a couple of large rooms in the front of one of those private houses that let out quarters to freshmen, and we had put the two beds in one room and used the other for a study (humorously so called). It was dark by the time we got there and I set about making lights, but Henry tramped up and down the room, running his fingers through his thick black hair until it stood on end. I'd never seen him like this before and was alarmed.

But when the lamps were lighted and I had found a pipe and filled it and touched it off, I sat down on the long, cushioned window-seat and said:

"Now then, nursery snatcher, out with it." Henry came to a halt before me, but he couldn't keep his hands still. He said:

"I suppose I'm crazy—mad. I suppose something's the matter. Anyhow, you know, I'm haunted—if that means anything to you—I've been haunted all my life." He was quite white (it was costing him something, I fancy, to come out at last with his secret) and his lips began to tremble, and I didn't at all like the way those hands of his fumbled and twitched about. He said:

"I expect I sound like an hysterical school-girl, don't I? Well, I can't help that. It's true enough. I've been haunted all my life, ever since I can remember. There's a—girl somewhere. I've got to find her. She may be in London or in Fiji or in Vienna or in Shanghai. She may be—she may be walking past this house at this moment. All I know is that somewhere she's alive and waiting. And I've got to find her before I die."

Frankly, I was appalled—terrified. This from Henry Trent the silent and unemotional and self-contained. He couldn't have alarmed me more if he had said that he saw a large purple hippopotamus with white plumes frowning at him across my shoulder. I stared into his face, in the mellow lamplight, and Henry gave a little laugh, saying:

"Oh yes, of course you think I'm insane. Well, I dare say I am. I was a fool to speak. It came out—somehow. My mother used to shut me up about it when I was a child. I ought to have stayed shut." But at that a sudden light of remembrance burst upon me, and I cried out:

"Great heavens! The little girl! It's Gray Eyes." And he said, "Yes, of course," as if he had supposed I knew.

I was so excited that I must have sounded quite angry.

"But, hang it all!" said I, "you made her up. She never existed, that child. You made her up out of your head, just the way you made up the queer sort of a world she lived in. If she'd been real . . . You can't be haunted by a person you manufactured yourself to amuse a couple of children with. That's all rubbish!"

But Henry Trent said:

"Oh, I didn't make her up. I'd known her always. She was just as real to me as if I could touch her." And that left me gasping.

What a stupendous—an unthinkable thing! What a life to live—haunted day and night by a being you've never seen in the flesh. If Henry had been a stranger to me or a lad overemotional and hysterical by nature I could have explained it all easily enough by saying, "He's off his head. Send him to a doctor." But Henry Trent!

I made another start.

"Do you mean to say," I demanded, "that that sort of thing has kept up ever since?—those fairy stories—the things you told Mary and me in our garden? Great heavens!"

"Not the fairy stories," said he. "I lost the trick of those long ago. I tried to and I did. I was ashamed of them. I don't see—other kinds of worlds any more, not that I could tell about, anyhow. It's hard to explain. There are things—different—I can't explain it—I don't see them in clear pictures. But I see *her* as clear as light."

I objected that Gray Eyes had been a little child, and Henry said of course she had, and so had he and I, but that

we'd all grown up together. I felt weak and dropped down in a chair. My pipe had gone out and I threw it aside on the table near by. But Henry kept on walking up and down the room, running his hands through his hair; and he talked on endlessly in broken fragments and fag-ends of sentences—a veritable cloudburst of talk, a torrent, a flood, an inundation. You may imagine what a vast relief it must have been to him. It had all been dammed up so long.

I rather think I followed him, within the next hour or so, as well as I was able, through pretty much the whole history of his experience with, and his mental attitude toward, this eerie marvel, for he hadn't always sat idle under it, not by any means. He'd been reading books on the psychology of hallucination, and looking up cases and making himself familiar with the pathology of the thing. Of course all this was beyond my depth, still it was the feature that I at once fastened upon and got worked up about. I saw Henry as a sort of psychological wonder, a fascinating mystery, and was all for rushing him off to old Professor L——, who was, at that time, the great swell of the faculty in such matters.

But it was soon evident that my friend had, long since, passed through this scientific phase, and come out at the other side. His interest in himself as a species of mental freak was as dead as Moses. He believed with all his heart and soul in the existence of a woman who, on some absurd astral plane or other, had grown up with him from childhood and was now, as always, waiting in the flesh for him to come and find her.

There seemed to me to be, as the logicians would say, an important fallacy just here, and I pounced upon it. I asked him:

"What possible reason have you for thinking that this—this—that *she* really exists in the flesh?"

I must have touched with my clumsy finger a secret and dreadful terror, for Henry turned white and began to tremble.

"*I know it!*" he cried out. "I can't tell you how or why, but I know it. I believe it with everything there is in me. Good God, Bill, can't you see that I've *got* to believe it? If I didn't I should cut my throat. I couldn't go on living." He seemed to be fishing in the air for new and magnificent words to tell how greatly he believed it, but the words wouldn't bite. They left him with open mouth, making dumb gestures.

"There couldn't be a God so wantonly brutal as that!" he said at last with a prodigious emphasis. And he said a great deal more of the same sort of thing, arguing, it seemed to me, noisily, with a kind of jerky bluster, against that secret, dreadful fear. There was much about twin souls that cried out for each other in the dark, and affinities (the word hadn't become ridiculous in the newspapers at that day), and the cry for the perfect mate, and Design in the ordering of the universe, and such like—any quantity of third-hand poetry (I dare say he thought he was inventing it himself) that he dragged out from the rubbish-heap to drape round and adorn the simple naked truth of what he believed.

I paid no more attention to all this flowery discourse than it deserved (and that was precious little, so I haven't set it down here in detail), but I paid very close attention when he stuck to the unadorned fact of his obsession.

"I tell you," he said again and again, "she is as real to me as you are. She always has been. If I had the necessary skill of hand I could draw her face for you here and now."

"By George! Henry," said I, "I wish you could. That *would* be getting somewhere, wouldn't it? That would be better than staring at little girls in the street. If only you could draw, or, better still, paint her, and then show the picture to every one you knew, that would be worth all the private detective work you could do in your life, fifty times over. I suppose you couldn't describe her very carefully to me, eh, and sit by me, while I made a picture, and show me where I was wrong? No! that wouldn't be any good. Likenesses can't be got at like that. If only *you* could draw!"

Henry stood staring at me for a long time with his hands in his pockets, and he took a turn up the room and back and stared at me again. Afterward he went across to the long, high window-seat (the characteristic feature of all college rooms in our day—I wonder if it still is) and looked at a sketch of mine in pencil that lay there—a careful study that I'd been making of the gnarled and knotted bare limb of a very old tree that stood close before one of our windows.

"It doesn't look so very difficult," said Henry. Now I had been more than ten years learning how to make that sketch—and it wasn't a very good sketch, even so. I wasn't pleased.

"Ho! doesn't it?" said I. "Just you try it, my boy! You'll soon see whether it's difficult or not." I soothed my soul with the reflection that if my drawing had been a study, not half so good, of a crowd of people, or of a sweetly pretty girl holding a bunch of roses and simpering across the top of them, Henry would have bowed down with admiration of my towering genius.

"'Not so very difficult,' indeed!"

If this were a work of fiction I suppose here is the moment

when Henry Trent should strike an attitude and exclaim in ringing tones:

"Bill, from this moment my life and my energies shall be consecrated to the Sacred Pursuit of Art." But it is, thank Heaven! a chronicle of very true events indeed, and my friend made no such an effective picture of himself. He began again to walk up and down the room with his hands in his pockets, and nothing more was said that day about the great idea I had put forth.

Still, I could see it in his mind, fascinating him, tempting him, growing to gigantic proportions there, and I was proud and excited to think what I had done.

You may well imagine that I am proud and excited now over the thought that I, not alone by the example of my masterly accomplishments in the arts, but by actual and direct suggestion, set that prodigious career on its way. For the next morning, Henry, with an elaborate mask of unconcern, asked me to lend him a drawing-pad and a pencil.

"Let's see if I'm good for anything," he said, and was all for dashing off a rival sketch of the gnarled tree limb. I dissuaded him from that, and, before going to a history lecture, set him to work upon an ivory-stained cast of that charming Italian bust called the "Unknown Lady."

I dare say you are expecting to hear that Henry showed from the very first an overwhelmingly unmistakable genius —burst, as it were, into sudden flower like a tropical bud. Well, he didn't. I should think there was never seen a more lamentable or grotesque failure than the smudged, ungainly, childish drawing I found him scowling over when I returned from that history lesson. My heart stood still.

And the worst of it was that Henry actually thought he was doing rather well!

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"Not so bad, eh?" he said, cocking his head at the horror on the drawing-pad. And I wish you could have heard the smug tone!

I didn't quite know what to do. I couldn't bear to discourage him, because, behind the mask, I could see that he was entirely in earnest, and dreadfully anxious. And besides it was all my fault. I'd given him this idea and I conceived that I was, in a way, responsible for its working out. So I set about, as gently as I could, correcting what he had done, and told him it wasn't quantity and blackness of lead alone that counted in a work of art—especially in the rendering of a white cast—gave him certain simple rules that he must never, never break, and delivered a little lecture on how unimportant mere outlines were—in fact, that nature hasn't any. Henry, of course, like all beginners, wanted to make a hard outline of an object and then fill it in with lights and shadows—especially shadows, very black, indeed, for good measure. He seemed to like my lecture and promised to remember it, and said he thought he'd keep on.

And didn't he keep on!

Henry's career has dealt a staggering blow to an early theory of mine—it isn't mine alone—most people cherish it—that to accomplish anything worth while in the arts one must have been born with genius or must have shown, early in life, strong indications of talent. I don't hesitate an instant to declare that at the age of eighteen he had no more talent for drawing than the newsboy who sells papers in the street or the cook who prepares your eggs for breakfast or the paying-teller who shoves money at you (I hope) out of his little cage at your bank. In short, he had no more special aptitude for the graphic arts than the average man. Sometimes I used to think he had even less than that.

What he accomplished—and you know as well as I what prodigious heights the man reached—he did by infinite patience and unremitting, undiscouraged, endless toil, and the fiercest and most single-hearted determination I have ever seen or heard of. Henry Trent made himself a great painter by sheer indomitable force of will. There's the truth of it. And I know what I am talking about, for I watched him from first to last.

And though his career is by far the most astonishing, in this regard, that I know of, it is not the only one. There occurs to me the case of a young student of sculpture (and a dreadful little cad, par dessus le marché) who, in Henry's day at Julian's, was working there under Denys Puesch and others. His poor half-size figures in clay were, week by week, the most pitiable attempts to reproduce the lovely human body that had ever been seen in Paris, and his fellow-students used to make the most cruel and heartless fun of them; yet, in half a dozen years, this person was showing at the Salon compositions by no means masterly but as competent and suave and graceful and pretty as you could ask for.

And I know of others still, so that my theory about inborn genius is pretty well riddled by now. However, I don't by any means advise you to send your doubtless brilliant son or daughter to Paris just because it would be nice to have a great artist in the family. For, alas! there's the other side of the shield, and I could tell you pathetic tales of it by the hour and hour. Perhaps I shall, later on (but not by the hour).

I suggested to Henry that it might save him a lot of precious time if he would begin by copying other people's drawings from the antique instead of working at once himself from the "round." He agreed with me, and I found in an old shop a whole portfolio of those large, simple renderings of

well-known antique heads, and put him to work. He went at them with the slow patience of a mediæval apprentice, took innumerable measurements with a pair of dividers, and, at the end of a week, actually had turned out two faithful, well-nigh faultless copies. They were as devoid of feeling or individuality as two photographs, but they looked like their models—even, I believe, to the occasional fly-specks—and that was the chief point.

Afterward I spoke in his behalf to the good Professor Hallauer, of the Art School, an excellent and highly gifted craftsman, a courteous and kindly gentleman with beautiful manners, a devoted lover of his task—the teaching of the young idea how to shoot (I mean to draw); and Professor Hallauer took Henry into a sort of elementary class recruited from the college, where they drew from the simplest antique, and where he had the benefit of much better criticism than I could have given him.

So it began, that towering career, and if I have been rather dull and technical and long-winded over the birth you will understand, I'm sure, why. The thing was too important to be hastened over in a paragraph.

I find that in my anxiety to get Henry well started upon his career I have said no more about the lasting state of excitement his revelations created in me. You mustn't think it dropped out of my mind as completely as I have let it drop out of this narrative. Indeed, for days—even weeks—I could think of little else, and, more than once, I tried to reopen the subject with Henry—had a thousand things to pump him about. But he, in that one long outburst, which must have lasted, as I remember it, two or three hours, seemed, as it were, to have emptied himself of interest in the matter—as a thrilling experience, that is.

The haunting, the obsession (I hardly know what to call it) had become, you see, a commonplace to him—a thing as unexciting as life itself, but as dear and as precious.

So I got out of him very little more at this time, but I had, quite unexpectedly, light from another source. His mother, on her way to New York for a shopping tour, made a somewhat roundabout journey of it and spent a part of one day with us. I took a walk with her through the town while Henry was at a recitation, and, after a little judicious prompting, she told me the story of his early childhood very much as I have told it some way back in this chronicle. I believe she tried to pump me, in turn, about his present state of mind, but I told her nothing. She was his mother, to be sure, but she would have been frightened and worried. I think I "did right by Henry" in keeping still.

I was unable, however, in another quarter to keep quite still, for, armed with this new material, I went by stealth to the august and revered gentleman in the faculty who was such a swell on psychology, and told him what I knew of the case, leaving out the name. He was very much interested and wanted to meet the patient, but when I told Henry, my friend became angry and abusive and refused point-blank to be put under anybody's silly microscope. So nothing more came of that well-meant effort, and after a further attempt or two I simply had to let it all drop.

It seems odd, but by the year's end Henry's strange obsession had begun to seem to me almost as commonplace and natural a member of the family as it did to him.

I suppose one would grow used to sitting down to table with a jaguar after a time. And as for ghosts, I know two or three families that would be inconsolable without them.

VI

SO no more in detail of Henry's and my four years in that pleasant university town beneath the elms—so sadly and grandly altered now, alas! that when I go back there I am made quite heart-sick by all the snowy splendor, and drop a regretful tear and hurry away.

Work and play—we had plenty of both—play enough to keep us fit, and work enough (but no more) to keep us at a safe distance from the Black Dog, "Conditions." I mean here curriculum work, you must understand, for apart from that we toiled prodigiously, both of us—I at my "life" painting in the College Art School; Henry, with a dogged, tireless perseverance almost incredible, at his copying of other people's drawings or of photographs. And after the first year he actually began to make progress, slow though it was, and was cheered and heartened by this and slaved all the harder.

Our long vacations we spent in the country, twice at a fishing village in Maine and once on Cape Cod—but never in Blandford; I couldn't have borne that, for, though time had soothed the first bitter anguish of my grief, the grief was still there, alive though sleeping. I hadn't the courage to risk waking it by walking the streets She had trodden, breathing the fragrance of Her garden flowers, entering that sweet, dim room where She had sat at the piano and sung "Sur le Pont d'Avignon." My Uncle George knew my

feeling about this and sympathized with it, as he seems always to have done with all my feelings, but he was older and more used to sorrow and more philosophical over it, so he lived on through each summer in the old place, and kept my dear mother's garden as she would have kept it, and wrote to me regularly every week. But the house in Madison Avenue had been sold, and the furniture and fittings stored away against the time when I might want them.

Here, then, ends our boyhood, Henry Trent's and mine. With sheepskins in our hands, and a vague, confused medley of many scholarly matters lying somnolent and already half forgotten in our minds, we stand face to face with the great world. But our eyes are turned across the sea, for it is there, in the Paris of my dreams, that I am to settle down for the real study of my profession, and Henry Trent is to cross the ocean with me for three months' preliminary travel.

VII

IT hadn't been easy for him to manage it. His mother opposed the plan quite strenuously, for she didn't "hold by" foreign travel. She thought it unsettling. And, besides, she had plans of her own, according to which Henry was to have begun reading law during that vacation in Judge Harvey's office in Blandford. She was, in her soft way, an incredibly obstinate woman, and I fancy would have won the battle had not an unlooked-for ally appeared—the mysterious aunt in Rhode Island, who had heard of Henry's artistic bent (perhaps had seen some of his painstaking studies), and was, for some odd reason, delighted with it.

She insisted upon standing him this journey abroad (she made a most liberal provision, by-the-way) and prevailed upon Henry's mother to give a reluctant consent.

So we sailed away together with light and eager hearts. My Uncle George had hovered for a time upon the verge of accompanying us, but in the end didn't go, only sent us, on the steamer, a big basket of hothouse grapes, and stood at the pier head to wave us farewell.

We went straight to Paris—*voie de* Cherbourg—and remained there a fortnight. Henry would have stayed the summer out but for me, for the city took an immediate and mysterious hold upon him—enchanted him completely. It even seemed to work some obscure change upon his very

character. He seemed to come out of his shell for the first time, like a turtle basking in the sunshine.

I thought all this was due to the mere change of environment, and that he would be just as delighted with any number of other cities or towns, and so dragged him away to Germany—Berlin and the Rhine, Frankfort, Wiesbaden, Homburg—even so far as Dresden and Vienna. But it wasn't the same to him at all. He pined for Paris, and, early in August, actually deserted me in Switzerland, where we had meant to climb (and I did), and fled back there alone.

So, in some resentment, I scrambled up a number of the peaks of the Zermatt region and of the Berner Oberland, and, at the end of the month, went for a week to Venice. Luckily it wasn't hot just then, and I had the most enchanting time, and swore that this fairy-land of canals and crooked lanes and lovely *palazzi* should see much of me in the future.

Well, it has, and seems to survive, though the Campanile (which I abhorred—an ugly, insolent, upthrust finger putting everything else in that incomparable piazza out of scale) fell down, to my delight, and is being rebuilt, to my disgust.

I met a beautiful Polish lady at my hotel who seemed to be mysteriously alone, and was quite responsive and grateful and clinging when I suggested that we listen to the music, of an evening, together, or go together to the Lido to bathe. She spoke vaguely of politico-family troubles (I gathered that her kin were, at least, "illustrious"), and resentfully of a husband absent at Ostend gambling away her fortune. And she sounded me, in the most casual fashion there could be, about my own history and connections and prospects.

But I think the beautiful Pole must slightly have relaxed her skill over this last, for there began to stir within me just a little wee bit of suspicion that presently grew bigger and, before the week was out, put me quite safely on my guard.

So I came away from Venice with my letter of credit undamaged, or at least very little encroached upon—des sommes derisoires—and I had seen many things that were beautiful (the Polish lady not least among them), and I had learned, at astonishingly small cost, an important lesson anent the perils of this wicked world—so often mixed in and wrapped up with its delights that you can't tell the one from the other, and don't want to.

And I should be a miserable prig of a liar if I pretended here that, on the train which hurried me away north, I didn't breathe a little sigh over the lady at the Grand Hotel. For she had, in truth, been very lovely and alluring, and, on the lagoon, at night, in our gondola, when the music barges were aglow with Chinese lanterns, and somebody was singing "Sole Mio," and the swarm of boats was bumping and crowding and squattering together in the velvet gloom and she sat very close to me on the leathern cushions —pearls hanging from her little ears, a thin scarf of lace and silver round her beautiful bare shoulders, and the yellow light from a gondola lamp fell across her face . . . Ah! . . .

If I breathed a little sigh, who can blame me? . . .

He is a poor starveling indeed who cannot look back into his youth and find some such hours of music and moonshine and harmless, foolish enchantment and an inconsiderable kiss or two and glances from soft eyes.

I have more than once wondered what became of the lovely Polish lady, whether she went back to her impressive family (and whether she had any) or the gambling husband

claimed her (if he existed) or she found some one less hurried and less suspicious than I was, to make her way smooth. I am almost sorry about that little ugly intrusive doubt which came to cool our romance and to button up my letter of credit in an inside pocket. Maybe she really needed help. And I could have afforded it—within reason.

She used to call me her "beau Anchise"—a youth, I believe, whom Aphrodite thought good-looking. But we never got as far as our classical prototypes did. I swear it.

Ah me!

I found Henry in Paris, whence he hadn't stirred, but not quite where I had left him, among the gilded luxuries of the "Continental." He had moved across the river to a little hotel in the Rue des Saints Pères, and he was still basking, like the above-mentioned turtle, in the sunshine. He was a new Henry entirely. I can't pretend to explain the extraordinary and mysterious effect upon my friend of mere atmosphere and environment, and so I sha'n't try. He must have been meant for Paris. He must have got born in New England and of New England people through some ridiculous mistake. At home here, in his appointed place, he had become quite astonishingly gay and effervescent. It often made me laugh—and with pleasure—to see the light in Henry's eye.

Also he had made, even in a month's time, incredible progress in the language, at which he had been rather a duffer. He didn't speak it well, of course, and to the end of his life I believe he never really *thought* in it—about complicated matters at least. But he chatted commonplace phrases quite readily and without the least self-consciousness (that deadly foe to the linguist). He had made casual acquaintances both to right and to left, and had found, by

sheer accident, two old, half-forgotten ones, both students of painting at Colorossi's, in the Quartier Montparnasse, with whom he lunched and dined at queer little crèmerie restaurants for a franc or less.

I was anxious to learn how much all this exterior change had affected the inner man of him—that vie privée—that stern, tremendous purpose which so set him apart from common folk. It hadn't altered in the very least in the world, as I might have known without wondering.

We had a talk one evening on the subject and Henry presented a new idea. He had been conscious, of course, of the unusual nature of the charm that Paris had laid upon him, and had evoked an explanation of it.

He'd made up his mind that She was there!—or, at least, if she wasn't there at the moment, that it was in Paris he should eventually find her. And that was what the peculiar influence of the place meant. Rather a staggering hypothesis! It staggered me, anyhow, but I had long given up judging Henry by ordinary standards. He was as purely intuitive as the most feminine woman who ever wore petticoats and explained a course of reasoning by "because." Logic wasn't in him.

And so he went about the streets and boulevards that he loved, or sat for hours on the terraces of the grand cafés, with his eyes wide open watching and watching and having heart failure, now and then, at the odd turn of some woman's head, and running after her down the street and meeting with black disappointments.

And he had been in every shop (there must be thousands of them) where photographs of royalties or of actresses or criminals or celebrities of any and all kinds are sold, or picture postal cards of strange countries with types of the

inhabitants. He had searched the files of these with endless patience.

You never could tell. . . .

It seemed to me as unfortunate and as pathetic as anything could well be, Henry's feeling about Paris, especially after I learned of the evolution of that strange theory. Paris is a long way from Blandford, Connecticut. I began to wish he had never come abroad at all, and I told him so. But Henry chose to be cryptic about it, and nodded a mysterious nod at me, and said:

"Just you wait, old Bill! Just you wait and see!" And that was all there was to be got out of him.

He had only a week left after my arrival, but we spent it delightfully and, on the next to the last day, had a most unexpected encounter. We were walking down the Rue de la Paix in the morning, on the shady side, and they'd been sprinkling the asphalt and there was the nicest of cool, summer smells (the nicest *city* smell, anyway). I sniffed it luxuriously and thought how lucky I was, and how unlucky was poor Henry, who wouldn't walk down the Rue de la Paix again in Heaven knew how many laborious years, but would sit in old Judge Harvey's office in Blandford with a book open before him, and sigh for the delights of far-away boulevards, and chestnut-trees in blossom along their borders, and cafés with terraces, and little, cheap restaurants, and soupe à l'oignon (on Mondays), and bouillabaisse (on Fridays), and the Seine fleuve, and the bateaux mouches upon it, and elderly newsboys shouting *Les Droits de l'Homme*—and ever so many more delectable things.

Pity the poor law student! *I* did, and almost wept about it, and squeezed Henry's arm that I was clinging to, and I suppose he wondered what the deuce was the matter with me.

A very tall, handsome lady just in front of us was sauntering down the street with an unusual grace of movement, in spite of the fact that she couldn't possibly be anything but an English lady.

Henry said: "You know, I've seen that woman somewhere before." And just then the tall lady stopped to look into a window that was full of alluring temptations outspread for just such as she. I saw her face and it was Lady Crail! I ran forward at once, calling out her name, and she turned to meet me. It was quite plain that she didn't know me from the Emperor Menelek. I said:

"Oh, Lady Crail! don't you even know who I am?" And she smiled up into my face (not so very far *up*—a couple of inches perhaps), crinkling her eyelids in a way she had, and said:

"My dear man, impossible as it seems that a woman could forget anybody so magnificent, I shall have to confess the truth. I haven't the remotest idea." But then all at once I saw a light of recognition come into her eye, and she cried:

"Good heavens! it's little Willie Castle! It's the petit dieu grec!" She seized both my hands and I dropped the hat I'd been holding, and she was so pleased that tears came to her eyes.

"My *dear* child!" she said again and again. "*How* was I to know that my little Greek god would grow up into such a big Greek god? Good heavens! And to meet like this by sheer accident—we might so easily have missed each other. If this weren't Paris I think I should kiss you on both cheeks here in the street."

"On the *cheeks*, dear Lady Crail?" said I, trying to look disappointed, and she laughed again and said I hadn't

changed the least in the world, except in size, and that I was a dangerous man and she wouldn't trust her own mother (who was seventy-five) with me.

I beckoned Henry up and told her who he was, and Lady Crail exclaimed over him, too, and said we were the two handsomest men in Paris and that she was proud to be seen talking to us. (She was always like this, the dear lady! Her banter didn't mean anything, it was just spirits bubbling over. I must say, however, that she was right about Henry. He was one of the handsomest men *I* ever saw, and very romantic-looking.)

She made us walk down the street with her and across the Place Vendôme to the Bristol where she was staying. She was desolated (so she put it) that she had to leave Paris on the morrow, but said that we must dine with her that evening, and meet Lord and Lady Howell, with whom she was travelling. I asked about Mary, and learned that she was in Switzerland with some friends. Afterward I discovered that we had actually been in Zermatt at the same time, quartered at hotels on opposite sides of the narrow village street, and never had caught a glimpse of each other!

Henry and I left Lady Crail at the Bristol with promises to return there at eight in the evening, and went away quite excited over the encounter.

"What a splendid-looking woman!" Henry said. "She's as young as a girl and, by Jove! she's a lot more beautiful than any girls I know. I wish she'd kissed *me*, confound your luck!" For under the shelter of the hotel portal I had actually got my kisses, on both cheeks, and had enjoyed them very much, thank you!

So, promptly at eight in the evening, we arrived back at the Place Vendôme, immaculately top-hatted and white-

waistcoated and pearl-gloved and buttonholed. We found our party just coming down-stairs, and were presented by Lady Crail with much flowery encomium. Lord Howell was a lean gentleman with white hair and a red face and an old-fashioned guardsman's mustache, and he used the most courtly manner toward his wife, who was stout and wore spectacles and a hideous dress of maroon velvet, but was a most delightful old lady for all that, though a little difficult to talk to, being deaf.

She was one of the most perfect types I have ever seen of the plain, unpretentious Englishwoman with no claim to beauty of any kind, not even much refinement of features, who yet has a certain indefinable air, which nobody could possibly mistake, and by which you at once know her to be a person of birth and breeding and consequence. It is a better thing to have than most of the kinds of beauty there are (but not all) and lasts longer.

The fourth member of the party was a Miss Borrold, a connection of the Howells', a plain and timid and silent virgin of thirty or thereabouts. You hardly noticed that she was there. She was almost invisible. And, though we were dining out in a restaurant, and it was Paris, all three of the ladies were without hats and in décolleté, as became good Britons. It certainly became Lady Crail, who looked too lovely for words, but it didn't become stout old Lady Howell, though that air of hers carried her through. And as for Miss Borrold nobody noticed whether décolleté became that poor soul or not.

We got into two fiacres (for this was long before the day of motor-cabs) and drove the short distance to the Maison d'Or in the Boulevard des Italiens. The glories of that famous little House of Gold had, of course, departed long

before this time, but to Lord Howell it was still a sacred enclosure full of memories of the old guard of true gourmets—now so sadly dwindled—of which he had been an honored member, and memories, perhaps, of the frail and beautiful and gay ladies who had kept the old guard so well amused. Demidoff, Prince Galitzen, the Duc de Rivoli, Nestor Roqueplan, Salamanca (that amazing Spaniard), Fould, Delahante—the ghosts of their dead voices and the ring of their unforgotten laughter whispered still about the place for Lord Howell, and I think he looked into the shadows and imagined he saw there the bold, bright eyes and the lovely shoulders of Deveria or Anna Deslions or Cora Pearl. And he told me that he was there when Rigolboche, in the simple costume of Lady Godiva, started upon her famous run across the boulevard to the Anglais.

Heroic days!

The old gentleman told us marvellous tales (doubtless Bowdlerizing with all due discretion) of these giants and goddesses (not too much about the goddesses!) of antiquity, and pointed out the table where Dumas used always to sit with Meilhac and Emmanuel Arène, and where, later on, the globular form of Oncle Sarcey was to be seen. And M. Casimir, who had come in person to greet his old patron, nodded sadly over these triste reminiscences, and seemed to drop a furtive tear and sighed deeply. He was already, I suppose, looking forward to his retirement, and the end of the celebrated little restaurant which came not many years after this.

We had, of course, a memorable dinner. "Margaritæ ante—" well, the proverbially unappreciative, he must have feared, our elderly host. And, indeed, to set such subtly delectable food and drink before three ladies and two boys

was a risk indeed, but, with my hand upon my heart, I can swear that at least one who was present at that feast groped, in his juvenile fashion, for the light of true understanding, and got some pale rays of it—realized, at least, that he was in the presence of solemn mysteries and tried to be worthy of them. For he had, even at twenty (almost twenty-one), the beginnings of a sense of distinction in these matters and became, later on, quite fussy and pretentious about it, and wished he had lived fifty years earlier when he could have had companions to his taste, and become a burden to his friends—almost a public nuisance.

In case you should imagine that I here refer to Henry Trent I will explain that I don't, but to another young man altogether whose name is Castle.

I remember everything that we had both to eat and to drink, but I won't go through the list because it might make you dissatisfied with your lot. And I remember also much pleasant, if not very brilliant, talk. Lady Crail was in high spirits (she always was, despite the disreputable husband who led her a sad life) and talked and laughed incessantly. She repeated to Lord Howell, and he was much amused, the little speech I had made to her at our first meeting, and it had such a success for the second time that I hadn't the courage to confess what a fluke it was. Lady Howell, being deaf, took but a small part in the conversation, but she ate a great deal and got dark red over it (to match her dress), and when asked if she had amused herself well in Paris, said: "Shocking! shocking!" which cryptic comment nobody tried to interpret.

But plain little Miss Borrold sat in almost total silence with her eyes fastened upon the Byronic beauty of Henry Trent across the table—the most humble and fascinated and

worshipful gaze I ever saw. Lord Howell saw it, too, and chaffed her quite unmercifully, and she nearly died of confusion and maidenly shame, and didn't look up from her plate again through the rest of the dinner.

It was nearly ten when we finished, and the Howells went home to bed. But Lady Crail said she wasn't going to lose two beautiful young men as early in the evening as that, that she was an old woman, and so it was perfectly respectable, but she didn't care a penny if it wasn't. We decided to drive in the Bois de Boulogne and tried to crowd, all four, into a fiacre because there wasn't a voiture de grande rémise to be had, but that was uncomfortable, and so, in the end, we took two fiacres, Henry and Miss Borrold (the lady in a great state of agitation) in one, and Lady Crail and I in the other.

We drove out the Champs Élysées and, beyond the Arc, along the beautiful Avénue du Bois, and so, through the gate, into the Bois itself where the night air was fresh and fragrant and cool, almost cold, against our faces, and the lights were few and far between, and there was a full moon overhead. We talked of a thousand things, but chiefly, of course, about all that had occurred since our last meeting in Blandford so long ago, and about that happy fortnight itself. I explained how I had gone on with my drawing and painting and had come to Paris to study, and Lady Crail was delighted to hear it, because that brought us so near together. She said I must come to them in Oxfordshire very often indeed, and paint the trees in their park and stay as long as I could manage. And, better yet, she told me how she and Mary were often in Paris for weeks together because they loved it so. She expressed a wish that Mary were with us on that evening, and I echoed it so fervently that Lady Crail had to laugh.

And then when we had turned at last homeward she spoke of my mother, very sweetly and tenderly and in words of such sincere love and admiration that the tears stung my eyes. (Both she and Mary had written me, at the time, letters of condolence that I long treasured. I have Mary's now.) And Lady Crail held my hand between hers and begged me to think of her as a sort of poor substitute mother, and to come to her with my troubles, if I had any, and my joys, which, of course, I must have, for she had always longed for the son that Providence had denied her, and, if she'd had one, she would have wished him to be like me. We passed a street lamp just then and, in that yellow glow, she looked so young and so charming and so very beautiful, that I burst out laughing. Lady Crail was indignant and demanded to know what there was amusing in her offer to be a mother to me. So I had to explain, and she said I was incorrigible and that she might have known how it would be. But I think she wasn't displeased, for all that, and, when we finally parted in the Place Vendôme, I got two more kisses, one on each cheek.

A mother's caress!

I asked Henry on our way homeward across the river (he had insisted upon my putting up at his little hotel in the Rue des Saints Pères) what he and Miss Borrold had talked about, and he said church rescue work in the slums. I was amused, but Henry said it was nothing to laugh at, and that he'd been very eloquent about it (a subject upon which he knew less than nothing) and little Miss Borrold had wept and predicted for him a life of noble consecration.

Poor lady, she never saw her Byronic rescue worker again, nor did I ever again see the good Lord Howell, for he died the next year of acute gastritis.

I wonder if his shade hovers wistfully about the Maison d'Or, and the Anglais, and Voisin's, and Paillard's, and the Marivaux, and the Gaillon, and meets other shades there, brothers of an ancient glorious time (and sisters, too), and sighs together with them for the food that is no more.

"There were giants in those days."

Henry had said: "Just you wait, old Bill! Just you wait and see!" without making any explanation of what he meant. Yet at that very moment the secretive dog had in his coat pocket a cablegram from the Rhode Island aunt (in answer to I know not what appeal, what heart-outpourings on his part). The cablegram seems to have said: "Await letter. Make no plans for return." And the letter came on the very morning that Henry was to have left Paris for Cherbourg and the homeward trail.

It offered a modest but sufficient yearly income for so long as Henry might wish to avail himself of it, in order that he might remain in Paris and devote himself to the study of art. And it deprecated any outburst of gratitude by saying that this arrangement was, after all, no more than an anticipation, since Henry's aunt had always meant to leave him her little fortune at her death. A part of it might be useful to him now, she gathered.

Useful!

Henry took the stupendous news (which, doubtless, he had half expected) with a histrionic assumption of calm, but, as for me, I wanted to dance and sing—and I'm not sure I didn't. I wanted to run about the streets telling everybody I met.

Old Henry and I to be together for unnumbered years to

come! No melancholy parting of the ways! No law-books in Judge Harvey's office!

Ah, but there must have been weeping and gnashing of teeth in a certain home in Blandford! It must have been a shrewd blow to the Gray Goose that had hatched a swan. In fact I know it was, for my Uncle George told me so. She broke with her sister then and there and wouldn't speak to her or hold communication until that lady's final illness two years later.

I have a feeling that the grim old woman in Rhode Island was so pleased at playing Providence that she didn't care.

VIII

THE Rue d'Assas is a thoroughly dull and unlovely street. It is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl nor good red herring. It is neither rich nor poor, neither pretentious nor slovenly. It is just a straight, narrow cañon of noisy paving-stones cut between high, featureless houses all the way from the Rue du Cherche-Midi to the Boulevard St. Michel, and apparently its only piece of good luck is that at one point it passes a corner of the Luxembourg Gardens and catches a whiff of complicated sweet smells and has a glimpse of children playing with hoops and balls.

But you never can tell. Those plain, high, uninteresting, stucco house fronts, each so like its neighbor that they make an endless, unbroken wall with doors and windows let in, may hide any sort of secret delight, with never a wink or a grin of betrayal. They may conceal, and you'd never guess it, veritable earthly paradises of green trees and flowers and silent cloistered peacefulness. In fact they do.

Between the Rue Vavin and the Rue Bara, just beyond the corner of the Luxembourg Gardens, and just across the street from the Lycée Montaigne or the École Coloniale—whichever it is—I never quite knew—there is a door which always stands open, and in which a stout old woman eternally sits cutting up vegetables in a big bowl. Allow me to present Madame Salomon, best of *concierges*, member of a hated and despised profession—the enemies to man—but,

despite her stern countenance, a kindly and even jovial soul who responds to fair treatment like a flower to sunshine after rain.

Ask after "les trois Anglais," and you shall see!

The open door gives upon an archway through and under the shallow house, and the little dog-kennel of a *concierge's* loge is in the arch just to the right. Hence a damp and stained and worn and mossy brick-paved path begins and seems to lead on forever between two vine-clad walls into the heart of a forest.

It is one of the astonishing surprises of which Paris is still, thank heaven! so full.

Out of a hot and clattering city street into a still and shady wood. Rus in Urbe! It makes you gasp and open your eyes. I know well it made Henry and me open ours, and draw long breaths of tremulous delight.

After, perhaps, fifty yards the mossy brick path turns sharply to the right, there's a gate in some palings, and, within, a "pavillon"—(as explained on the affiche outside the street door)—"avec deux ateliers d'artiste, et beau jardin." The pavillon is a plain box-like structure of two stories and of no architecture. The lower story is a big studio with a bedroom off it and a kitchen, and there is an outside stair (and an inside one, too) which leads to the upper floor. This is a studio also, forty feet by thirty, with a huge north light, and other windows beneath it and others still at the ends of the room. And there are two bedrooms here, on the south side, and three little wooden balconies overlooking the garden.

"Il n'y reste, enfin, absolument rien a desirer," said the good Mme. Salomon, and, with tears in our eyes, we agreed with her. We should have taken that extraordinary country-

seat at any reasonable or unreasonable sacrifice—looking elsewhere wasn't even to be thought of. As a matter of fact we got it for two thousand francs a year. A derisory sum, as Mme. Salomon justly pointed out; and even now I can't imagine why it should have been so cheap. Perhaps people were afraid of the damp.

We went down to explore our "beau jardin" and were enchanted with it. It was the oddest garden I ever saw. It was all angles and corners and unexpected nooks and cul-de-sacs and tiny vistas, and, one end, there was a narrow, paved allée between high walls that must have been thirty or forty yards long and had a little, cracked, trickling wall fountain at its end. There weren't many flowers—some roses and a few fleurs-de-lis—and there was no turf (there seldom is in Parisian gardens) because it was too shady, but there were huge old trees of many kinds with black, smooth, mossy boles; chestnuts, both red and white, and true acacias (the yellow ones) and false acacias (the tall ones that we call locusts, and they have white flowers) and a cedar of Lebanon and a row of lindens (tilleuls) and an elm or two. Also there were lilac shrubs in great profusion. Any quantity! They stood in rows against almost all the boundary walls; against the walls of the pavillon, too. One imagined how heavenly the scent of the place must be in April.

And as for peace and privacy!

Not even the locataires of the house that fronted the street could spy into our garden, for the back wall of the house was blank and windowless—only a little ventilating hole now and then—and covered with ivy that grew on latticework from bottom to top.

There was another big garden behind ours still, so it must have belonged to some house in the Rue Notre Dame des

Champs, but the wall between was fifteen feet high, so that we could neither see nor be seen, and we never even heard a human sound from there. Also to right and left there were two small enclosures belonging to houses in the Rue d'Assas, into which we could see from our balconies but not from the ground. In one of them three little pale children sometimes played mirthless games and never seemed to laugh (but why they weren't across the street in the big, sunny Luxembourg Gardens, I don't know). In the other a small, bent old lady in black walked up and down every day, toward noon, leaning upon the arm of a sturdy bonne, and, apropos of this old lady, we had, later on, a sort of adventure and caught a glimpse of a mystery which was never to be explained. I shall set it down here out of place, lest it never get in at all.

Henry and I chanced one morning to be walking up and down that long paved allée of which I have spoken—the one with the cracked-wall fountain at its end, and it extended between our back wall and another high wall far beyond what we had imagined to be the confines of the little old lady's garden. On the other side of this wall a woman was crooning, in a low, sweet, mother's voice, to a child, old nursery songs. We had often heard her before and wondered who she was, and never expected to find out, though we were sure that she must be young and lovely, and, from the tender, sweet sound of her voice, we knew that the child must be her first child, for the voice had a sort of hushed and wondering awe in it as well as ecstasy and joy. It had never sung nursery songs before. We were quite sure of that. She sang, I remember:

"J'ai descendu dans mon jardin,
J'ai descendu dans mon jardin

Pour y cueillir le romarin;
Gentil coq'licot, mesdames,
Gentil coq'licot nouveau."

And "La Bergère":

"Il était un' bergère,
Et ron, ron, ron, petit patapon;
Il était un' bergère
Qui gardait ses moutons,
Ron, ron,
Qui gardait ses moutons."

And also she sang,

"Sur le pont d'Avignon
L'on y danse, l'on y danse . . ."

as my beautiful mother used to sing it, and that was hard to bear.

But then, quite suddenly, the woman with the child gave a most dreadful scream—a scream to freeze the blood in your veins, to fix you in a sort of paralysis so that you couldn't stir. And after it she screamed again and still again — horrible, indescribable hoarse shrieks that seemed to tear their way out of her throat. Never before or since have I heard from human lips such a madness of terror made audible in sound.

Henry and I stood staring at each other, and I shouldn't wonder if our hair was on end. I fancy we couldn't move a muscle for many seconds. But I remember that it was he who came to life first and cried:

"Good God! what can be happening over there? Get a

ladder or something!" And he began to run up the narrow allée toward the house. All this while the woman with the child was uttering those dreadful shrieks, and my spine was prickling with horror.

I called after Henry that there wasn't any ladder, and, just then, we began to hear other voices from across the wall —a woman's voice and a man's, breathless, as if their owners had run in great haste (and no wonder). Henry came back, and I said:

"Here! get up on my shoulders and jump for the top of the wall. You're lighter than I am." I stooped to let him on my back, and then rose with him, and, when I was upright, took his feet in my hands (no joke I can assure you, for he wasn't a featherweight) and so pushed him up to the limit of my reach. With that he could get a grip on the wall's coping and so pulled himself up astride of it.

I heard him utter a cry of pure amazement, and, in a few seconds, he dropped back beside me.

The woman with the child had been the little old lady in black! As Henry came into view a stout man-servant was just carrying her in his arms into the house—she seemed to have fainted quite away—the bonne, wringing her hands, was close behind. And lying face down on the damp earth under a lilac shrub was a large bisque doll with yellow hair!

I apologize for this rather grisly story. I have introduced it here only because the story always seems to me inseparable from our lovely green garden in the Rue d'Assas—the skeleton in the cupboard of that otherwise sweet and cheerful and happy enclosure.

I believe I have forgotten to say that we found our future home not by any inspired efforts of our own, or by chance,

but through the agency of one of Henry's painter friends, who also advised our going to the club-rooms of the American Art Association on the Quai de Conti, and looking upon the bulletin-board there for notices of furniture, easels, and studio properties in general that were to be sold by the club members. So we went there, and happily fell upon a man who was on the point of leaving Paris and had a quantity of things to dispose of. We bought almost all of his furniture —beds and chairs and chests of drawers and tables and a big, low divan and no end of such things at a reasonable price (though it came to more than a whole year's rent), and when we had moved them into the pavillon in the garden it quickly became a very comfortable place as well as a beautiful one. Linen and silver and rugs and three large panels of old Flemish tapestry I had brought with me from the stored treasures of Madison Avenue.

So we installed ourselves in sybaritic luxury (to the awe and delight of Mme. Salomon, who seems to have been used to humbler folk), and, when all was complete, went away to the Norman coast to escape the heat of August.

There, in a tiny hamlet at the foot of gigantic cliffs, we found Henry's painter friend who had begged us to follow him en villégiature—a pleasant, round-faced man of middle age and a falsetto voice. He had been born in France, but removed to America at the tender age of three, and, because of this (perhaps also his papers weren't quite in order—I don't know), he was being pursued by the French Government, like the villain in a play, and told that he must do his service militaire or be guillotined, or get out of the country and stay out. He had been arrested three times, and had to appeal to the American Embassy, which was getting bored with him, and it was all quite pathetic, for he loved the country of his

birth, and was a serious artist and a good one, and could paint nowhere so well as in la belle France.

He hadn't yet been ferreted out at Sables-sous-falaise, and so was very cheerful when Henry and I arrived. He welcomed us with open arms, and so did the pretty little model who was keeping him company (and whom he meant to marry one day when he was richer).

"Je m'appelle Godelinette. Un drôle de nom, n'est ce pas? Mais chic, vous savez, tout de même."

We bathed in the sea every morning, and every afternoon, too, and, between times, Picquart, the American-Frenchman, and I painted the sands and cliffs, and Henry tried to paint a certain pine-tree, but couldn't, and so made laborious drawings of the pretty head of Mlle. Godelinette, which weren't half bad.

If I'd been Picquart I shouldn't have allowed it, but no harm was done, for Godelinette was a faithful little soul, and sat mending Picquart's socks the while she posed for Henry.

It is curiously difficult to make Anglo-Saxon people believe it, but these "collages" which are so common in the vie de Bohème of Paris are among the simplest and faithfulest and most mutually profitable alliances the present scribe knows of anywhere. There is no dissipation about them, no riotous living, no heavy drinking, no promiscuous flirtation or worse. The vows that never were made are punctiliously kept; the few francs of the head of the house are carefully hoarded that they may go as far as possible—they aren't by any means squandered on gaudy clothes—his shirts are mended, his socks are darned, his battles are fought, his ambitions are cheered on—and if ever his eye shows a masculine tendency to rove, Heaven help him!

The present scribe has seen a good deal of so-called re-

spectable matrimony with bell and book and ring (and choir-boys singing up the aisle) which might with advantage borrow a leaf from the book of these humble, sinful, degraded, reprehensible, and utterly damned unions of the Latin Quarter. But he confesses it with fear and trembling and with dark-red blushes of vicarious shame, for he himself is the most stodgily respectable of all respectable people in the world, and wouldn't for anything have his respectable friends know that he has ever shaken the hand or eaten the salt of such reprobates.

And that he should be discovered actually saying a kind word for them! . . .

Early in September we all returned to Paris, and Henry and I started in to work at the famous Académie Julian in the Rue du Dragon. We joined the Bouguereau-Ferrier class, which worked in the big room down-stairs, though, after three months, I left Henry there and went up-stairs to the class of MM. Benjamin Constant and Jean Paul Laurens.

There has been so much of both truth and romance masquerading as truth written about the schools of Paris that I shall have very little to say here about Julian's. You must see us well started there at work, and then we will close the door behind us and go out where the air is sweeter to breathe and talk about something else.

One of Henry's friends, an ancien of the school, was on hand to introduce us and guide our first steps, so that we had, at the outset, none of those thrilling experiences which all nouveaux have in the romances. Indeed, as a matter of fact, the old-time hazing of new students was nearly done with by the late nineties. It re-awoke only now and again when some ill-advised youth assumed too much dignity al-

together, or resented good-natured chaff, or wore too many beautiful clothes.

On that first Monday morning, when we arrived early, we found in progress the usual weekly exposition de beauté—a wild-looking throng of models in the court-yard, and, inside, at least a dozen, or perhaps fifteen, men, women, and children (quite half of them Italians), who, one by one, left their clothes in a corner and mounted the model-stand, to be put into this, that, and the other pose by the massier, and unmercifully criticised by the class, and voted upon, and made to stand down again, and, finally, to go away disappointed—all but one, who was to be the model for the coming week.

Our model for that first week, I remember, was a tall, red-haired girl with a very pallid skin, and she was said to resemble (and to be intolerably proud of it) the famous Sara Brown, whom I never saw.

Henry's friend introduced us to the massier, a melancholy Frenchman called Lalique, who bade us formally welcome and asked us when we should like to "payer à boire" (the anæmic survival of the once ceremonious "bienvenue"). We had thought to do the thing rather well, and have, each, a lunch-party for the entire class instead of a mere drink all round, but Henry's friend voted that ostentatious, and so we didn't suggest it. We left it to the massier, and it was settled that Henry should entertain that morning during the second "rest," at the café across the street, and I on the next day. So the room settled down, the red-haired girl took her pose, and work began, Henry drawing from a low stool, close to the model-stand, and I painting farther back.

In the first rest there was some inspection of our efforts. Henry hadn't done more than begin to block out his figure,

but I, used to working very quickly, had almost finished my preliminary charcoal sketch, and it was voted "pas si mal, vous savez. Il sait son métier, le gros blond."

In the second "rest" we trooped across the street, just as we were, in blouses and painting-aprons—a wild-looking throng, but no surprise to that neighborhood—and Henry "paid to drink"—also to eat for such as wished a roll or a brioche or a madeleine with their verre. A speech was demanded, and Henry made a brilliant beginning:

"Douces et jolies mesdames" (there weren't any), "aimables et souriants messieurs—" (Hearty cheers and cries of "Rudement chic, ça! Vive les Anglais!") But at that crucial instant Henry's French (at best precarious) deserted him altogether, and he had to come to an inglorious close in his native tongue. For all that he was a decided success, for he laughed as hard as any one else at the flight of his French vocabulary, and looked so handsome and romantic and jolly that he couldn't have failed to win the hearts of even such a motley crew of rapins as that was. And he sent across to the atelier a tall glass of grog Américain and a plate of brioches and cakes for the red-haired model, who was touched by this thoughtfulness, and told him how she had always admired the English, and offered to pose for him any time he might choose.

We both wasted a great deal of time and breath at first in correcting people when they called us "les deux Anglais," but it did no good whatsoever, and presently we gave it up. Any one who speaks English *is* English in that quarter—or used to be in our day there. I well remember my fruitless struggles with the good Mme. Salomon on this point. I waylaid her one day in the garden and sat down on a bench with her and told her how different England and America

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were, and about the great War of the Revolution when we broke with Perfidious Albion forever, and about how many bonds there were between les États-Unis and la belle France; and we mingled our tears over the gallant Lafayette. I was pretty sure I'd made it plain that time that Henry and I weren't English, but an hour later when I went out I heard the good woman talking to her husband in the loge about l'Anglais qui avait parlé si gentiment de son pays et d'un nommé Lafayette." (A man called Lafayette.)

After all that eloquence!

It chanced that on the second morning we arrived at Julian's a few minutes late so that the first pose had already begun and work was under way. More than that, Henry's place near the model-stand, which he had chalk-marked and initialled on the floor in the usual fashion, was occupied by a gigantic Frenchman, one Laplace, the wag of the class and, in a mild way, the bully—a man with a huge mop of black hair which he never parted—

"Eh bien, quoi! Est-ce que les grecs ont divisé leurs cheveux—ou les romains? Non! Je crois bien que non! Alors je suis grec, vois tu!"

—and heavy black eyebrows that met in a straight line over his nose, and an enormous beard. And he wore a beret and wide corduroy trousers and a red sash—vrai type du Boul' Miche. Henry looked at me as we hung up our coats, and I said:

"I think I should have it out now."

"I think I will," said Henry, and took his drawing-board and made his way in to where Laplace was sitting.

"Vous avez pris ma place, vous savez!" he said quite civilly, and pointed down to his initials on the floor, which the Frenchman hadn't even taken the trouble to rub out. La-

place looked up at him contemptuously and met Henry's pleasant smile, which must have been deceptive, for he roared out in his bull-of-Bashan voice:

"Quoi donc? Qu'est ce que tu chante là, imbécile?"

"You've got my place," Henry said again. He glanced round at the others who were grinning at him, all but the massier, who looked uncomfortable and apologetic but helpless before so many.

"Your place, idiot!" roared the Frenchman. "You haven't got any place. A nouveau with a place!" He waved an eloquent gesture with two dirty hands.

"He dreams, c't Anglais là! He dreams of places. Take him away. Take him to Charenton up the river—" (an asylum for the insane)—"Nom d'un nom, d'un nom de Dieu! Will nobody take this sacred nouveau away?"

"Are you going to get out of my place?" Henry asked.

"Sacred thousand thunders of God! head of a pig, no! no! no!"

Henry laid down his drawing-board, took a careful hold upon the Frenchman's shirt-collar with both hands, dragged the man backward off the low stool, and threw him some distance away, where he landed flat on his back, after bowling over two easels, en route.

Before you could say "knife" the whole room was in an uproar, and Puesch's sculptors and Baschet's painters and draftsmen came crowding to the division-rail to see the fun.

Laplace, very red in the face, got to his feet and snatched up a near-by stool. I thought he was going to brain Henry with it, and took a step toward him, calling out:

"Hè! pas de ça, tu sais!—None o' that, now! Put down that stool or you'll have *me* to deal with, too." I have called the man gigantic, and so he was, as most of the rapins at

Julian's went. He was above six feet, but so, for that matter, was I, and Henry not far below us, though he was rather slender and hadn't our weight of bone. He wasn't to be despised, though, not by any means, and he meant to see his own rows through, himself. He said:

"Shut up, Bill! Let the fellow alone!" and I did shut up. I looked where he was, and he stood with his feet apart, and his arms swinging, and a light in his eye, waiting for Laplace to throw that stool.

It wasn't thrown, as you may have guessed. All Frenchmen have a horror of the inexplicable readiness of the brutal English to use their fists, and to use them hard. What can you do with a race that falls upon you silently and beats you half to death instead of waving its arms in your face and overpowering you with vituperation.

Is it fair? Is it just? Is it la guerre? A thousand times, no! Quels Goths! Quels animaux! Quelles brutes, privées de raison!

Laplace was assuredly no coward, for we came to know him well, later on, and found that out early in our acquaintance. But he was not prepared, on this morning, to indulge in la boxe over the trivial matter of a seat at Julian's. He put down the stool and swept a magnificent low bow almost to the floor, then struck an attitude and said:

"Inutile en effet, de déranger tous ces messieurs; mais dès maintenant vous pouvez vous considérer comme mort." So Henry considered himself as dead, and the two, amid roars of general laughter, solemnly shook hands and work was resumed—with Henry in his proper place.

Indeed, for some odd reason, the Frenchman took a great fancy to Henry—off whom he imagined himself to have scored very neatly in that little affair (but so, to our per-

plexity, did the entire class)—and insisted upon sitting next to him across the street in the second "rest," when I "paid to drink," and drank his health and prosperity, and, in short, from that morning, took Henry under his own especial wing.

He was a strange being, with his loud voice and his eternal swagger and his vainglorious boastfulness and his ever-present sense of humor (which was robust, to say the very least) and his comic-opera clothes—a true survival of the old-fashioned Latin-Quarter étudiant who hasn't even yet quite perished from off the land—or hadn't, at least, in the late nineties. Nobody seemed to know where he lived or how, but he was usually to be found at Julian's making a loud noise, save at long, irregular intervals when he disappeared altogether for a week or two or even for a month, and reappeared quite unchanged, and said he had been visiting his little cousin, Nicholas of Russia, or his uncle, the Emperor Menelek, or whatever other grand name came into his head at the moment. But as to where he really had been hiding no one ever had the least idea. And he would have wept if he had thought you didn't believe him to be a thoroughly desperate and abandoned character.

He kept us in continual roars, for his extravagant gasconade was always funny gasconade. He adored to begin a discussion of any sort, political or religious or historical—anything about which he might hope to get somebody excited, and he would defend his absolutely untenable position in the most preposterously comic fashion and set the whole room into such an uproar that Papa Julian would have to come in and quiet us.

He had a friend in the class, a handsome little blond called Meunier, who was an advanced type of élégant and wore lovely clothes, and chromatic symphonies in cravat and

socks, etc., and ruby scarf-pins, and rings on his fingers (and bells on his toes, for all I know); and he waxed his mustache and was always just freshly shaved, and smelled of rare scents—a truly beautiful person. These two had perfected a novel form of entertainment which, for some unknown reason, they called "Vêpres siciliennes." Laplace, bent anxiously over his work and without the slightest facial expression, would roar out, in his booming, bellowing voice, intoned phrases which, at some distance, bore the most startlingly realistic resemblance to parts of the service of the Church of Rome. Little Meunier would chant the responses in a high falsetto squeal like a choir-boy, and they would go on like this for half an hour. Unfortunately the phrases they used cannot be repeated here, for they were quite dreadfully blasphemous—far the most ingenious and complicated and original blasphemies I have ever heard, but so funny that you forgot the irreverence and didn't mind at all, however pious you might happen to be. It was all funnier than I can find any words for—and much too funny to write down.

And when they had tired of "Sicilian Vespers" they would, by request, give another form of entertainment, called "Le Printemps dans le cœur," in which the bellowing Laplace, as before bent with expressionless face over his work, would make amorous advances which grew rapidly in fervor, to Meunier, in the character of a simple country lass whose coy and maidenly resistance was at length overcome. And this was even funnier and more popular than "Sicilian Vespers," but of course quite untranslatable.

Before we leave, for the present, this genial pair of ruffians I must tell one last little story of Laplace because it is so very characteristic. He turned up one morning, after a day's absence, with one arm in a sling (the left one, luckily)

and an appearance as of having been washed (which must have occurred in the hospital against his will). When surrounded and questioned he said he had fought a duel in the Bois de Boulogne with a certain member of a maison princière, who had used insulting language about his (Laplace's) aunt, the Empress Eugénie. He swaggered about with his wounded arm, and strutted and boasted quite intolerably, and, so far as I know, never confessed to any one the very creditable truth, which was that he had saved the life of a little child in a traffic accident and very nearly lost his own doing it.

So no more just now of the hirsute Gascon and the élégant with the lovely clothes. Indeed, I myself saw little more of them, save when they came occasionally to the Rue d'Assas, for, as I have said before, I left the Bouguereau-Ferrier class after a few weeks, and went up-stairs to the small, overheated studio where MM. Constant and Jean Paul Laurens gave invaluable criticism twice a week to a class composed mostly of Americans and English. I found just as much noise there—more, if anything (Anglo-Saxony trying to outbohème the Bohemians), but less wit; and I worked very hard and won the interest and regard of M. Constant especially, who never paid much attention to his students unless he thought they were worth while.

IX

ONE fine afternoon in late September Henry and I were on our way homeward up the quiet Rue du Luxembourg. I don't remember where we had been—across the river, perhaps, for we worked at Julian's only in the morning and spent the afternoon as we pleased, painting at home or copying in the Louvre or flâning about the streets and watching the world go by from the terrace of a café. I remember that I was arguing heatedly over some important question which the world needed settled for its easement—that Rodin was a greater genius than Phidias, or that he wasn't, or that French architecture had ceased to be, or that the cat-like grin of Monna Lisa Gioconda was a vastly over-rated facial contortion, and all the popular cackle about its alleged mystery would astonish the good Leonardo very much indeed if he could rise from his grave to hear it. Some such moderate and well-pondered views as these were bursting upon the world as Henry and I walked up the Rue du Luxembourg alongside the high iron palings of the gardens, and I was no more than half conscious that we passed two young ladies who were descending the street. I didn't even glance toward them. But a moment afterward Henry said: "Those two girls stared at you as if they knew you, Bill." And I turned to look back. The two young ladies had halted some distance away and were standing still beside the garden palings with their backs toward us. They were

dressed in mourning. One of them was very tall and looked oddly familiar, and she seemed to be trying to comfort her companion, who had a handkerchief at her face as if she were in tears.

All in a flash it came to me that they were my cousins Naïla and Marian Castle, and I had passed them by like an utter stranger. I ran back at once, and when she heard my steps Marian turned to meet me.

"You cut us, Willie!" said she. "You cut us dead. We stared you in the face and you never even blinked. It made Naïla cry."

I called myself names, of course, and explained how I had been arguing so busily over something or other that I hadn't even noticed them until Henry spoke. Then I turned to Naïla and all but uttered a cry of astonishment and dismay.

Never before had I seen such a cruel change in any human being. Poor Naïla's dainty and ethereal beauty was almost as completely gone as if it had never been. The sinister threat which had shown itself five years before had proved all too true a prophecy. In the first place she wore over her lovely eyes a pair of heavy spectacles of dark glass that were almost like the motoring-goggles of the present day, for they had sides so that no pure light should penetrate from above or below. Her face was very pale and, against the unrelieved black of her clothes, looked sallow, and it was so thin that the cheeks were hollow and the chin sharp and pointed; even her once perfect mouth was sadly altered, the lips nearly colorless and indrawn, and her pretty hair had lost its sheen, seemed to have grown thinner, and looked a sort of brown-drab.

A ghastly remnant of the Naïla I had known!

I tried to cover my surprise and pain with the warmth of my greeting, but she must have seen, even through her dark glasses, that moment of hesitation, and something at least of the shock must have betrayed itself in my face. I found that her hands in mine were trembling violently. Naïla said:

"There isn't much left of me, is there, dear Bill? I don't wonder you passed us by." And that was too much.

"Oh, Naïla! Naïla!" I cried, with tears in my eyes. "I'm so dreadfully sorry to find you ill like this. You've not the littlest bit of an idea of how sorry I am—or how glad I am, too, to find you at all—ill or well. What are you doing in Paris?"

They told me that they were living here—had been for eighteen months, except in the heat of summer. Oddly enough they had an apartment in the Avénue de l'Observatoire not more than five minutes' walk from our studio. I didn't ask then about Leipsic and the singing-lessons, for it was all too plain that poor Naïla would never sing in public so long as she was in the present sad state. But I told them who Henry was and that we were living together, and asked if I might present him. Marian looked at her sister, and poor Naïla began to tremble again. It was plain to see that her nerves were almost a total wreck. But at last she said:

"Yes. Do by all means. You must forgive me for hesitating. We meet so few people, and I'm so dreadfully conscious of being a sort of walking corpse! One's vanity dies last of all, Bill." So I beckoned to Henry, and he came and was introduced. Of course he knew who my cousins were as soon as he heard the names, for I'd often spoken of them to him and told him how pretty Naïla was. I was almost afraid to speak her name now, after all I'd said about her,

but I needn't have been, for Henry bent over her hand with all his usual romantic empressement (and a bit added on, I believe, for good measure because she looked so pathetic). Henry was always to be trusted in such matters. Appeal to his pity or sympathy and you had him fast.

He "made the court" to my cousins so gracefully and with such apparent candor that even Marian was softened by it and got a little spot of color in each of her pale cheeks. What poor Naïla felt behind those disfiguring goggles couldn't possibly be seen, but one saw that she had not taken a dislike to Henry, for, suddenly, as we were making our adieux she put her hand on Marian's arm, as if to check any objection which might arise in that quarter, and asked us if we wouldn't dine with them that evening in the Avénue de l'Observatoire. We promptly said we would, and it was fixed for eight o'clock, and so we parted and went our different ways.

I was so saddened and depressed that I could hardly speak for the rest of that afternoon.

Poor little Naïla! Poor little crushed and wounded maid that had been so lovely and so full of ambition!

It wasn't fair.

Her plight gave me such a fit of the blues that I couldn't even bear Henry's company, and so got a pipe and a book and went and hid myself in the garden until it was time to dress.

We found my cousins quite delightfully housed at the bottom of the Avénue de l'Observatoire, which is, I think, with its allées of trees and its green turf and its stained old monuments (terminating in the great Carpeaux fountain), quite the loveliest thoroughfare in Paris, perhaps in all the world. That stretch of it from the Garden gates to the

Carpeaux fountain is called the Petit Luxembourg, and nou-nous sit on the benches under the long rows of trees, and little children play along the gravel paths, and innumerable birds come to drink from the pools and to quarrel there about household affairs and socialism and votes for women.

We went up in a little bird-cage of a rat-trap of a man-trap of a wheezy, wobbly ascenseur, to the fifth story—cinquième étage au dessus de l'entresol—and were met by the typical Parisian bonne-à-tout-faire (they are all just alike—a sort of sisterhood—stout and smiling and astonishingly capable), then at once whisked out by my cousins upon their balcony to see the view before it got too dark. They were justly proud of their view, which was indeed superb. I have said that the house was at the bottom of the avénue, and so they looked (being on a corner) at one side over the lovely long stretch of the Petit Luxembourg and, at the other, over the gardens themselves, a veritable forest—a flowery, arbored park with the sunken basin in the middle distance and the Palais du Senat to end the vista. But, over and beyond the Senate, you looked across all Paris, and saw the river, and the Île de la Cité with Notre-Dame, and the lovely spire of the Sainte Chapelle, and the dome of the Opéra, and many other swelling domes and lordly towers; and far, far away against the horizon the heights of Montmartre and the church of the Sacré Cœur gleaming atop them in that evening light like a sculptured pearl. And there was a dusty opalescent haze over the whole panorama that made it like a dream, like something magical and enchanted out of the *Arabian Nights*, like nothing that words can describe—mine least of all.

I was so overcome at this heavenly vision that I all but

wept with speechless delight, and so did Henry, and so did my cousins who saw it every day, morning, noon, and night, yet never lost the freshness of their wonder over it.

But in all too brief a time that pearly opalescent haze turned dun and thickened and darkened—Paris seemed to exude darkness like a noxious vapor—and all at once it was night. So we sighed and shook our heads and turned back into the dining-room where the bonne-à-tout-faire had been lighting the candles. No views for her. Ah, dame, non! Pas si bête—and we sat down at once, a partie carrée, to a very good, if simple, dinner—good all but the wine. You can't trust women in those matters, alas! I don't know where my cousins came by that vile libel upon the fair vineyards of Bordeaux, nor yet what they paid for it—but at any price, however low, they'd been had.

Naïla, though still a piteous spectacle to one who had seen her in health, looked much better in the mellow candle-light than she had looked under the afternoon sun. She had put off her harsh black and was in a yellowish-white summer evening dress—out of which her poor neck and arms peeped cruelly thin. And in place of the disfiguring goggles she wore across her eyes a little bandage made of some sort of thin green veil stuff which she must have been able to see through. And in her hair she wore a sort of fillet or bandeau (or whatever the name is) of the same color, also at her breast some flowers with green leaves—as brave an attempt as ever was to carry off an affliction with a high head, and as successful, too, for the effect was much more quaint than ugly. The three delicate touches of green were far from inartistic.

Marian was still in black, a black silk evening dress, and, in her severe fashion, looked quite handsome and stately.

I thought of what my dear mother had said about her five years—nearly six—before.

We didn't talk about the past, at table, we left it undisturbed in its grave. There was too much sadness and tragedy there, and hopes crushed, and lives cut down. We talked about Paris and how we all loved to be there, and about how Henry and I were to become famous painters and strut about with red rosettes in our buttonholes, and people going down on their knees to us to paint their portraits. And we talked about the studio Henry and I had in the Rue d'Assas, and about how my cousins must come there to see it. They were greatly interested, especially in the garden, and said they would come as soon as ever they were asked. I didn't quite know how they felt in the matter of chaperonage, and tried, in roundabout ways, to find out. But when they discovered what I was driving at they said at once that they didn't bother about chaperons—especially when it was the case of an own cousin—and had often been together to studios, even in the evenings, when there was a party—in short, that they were quite shamelessly Bohemian (which made Henry and me laugh). And so we fixed upon the very next afternoon for them to come and call on us.

But all through this animated talk I couldn't help seeing that poor Naïla, for all her vivacity and laughter and quick interest, was really in a shocking state of nerves. Her hands were never still for an instant, and, now and then, her chin and her lips trembled so violently that I was sure her teeth would have chattered if she had let them. And the worse her physical state the harder she laughed, and the faster she talked, and the more pathetically she tried to cover it all up and seem gay and cheerful.

A sight to wring your heart!

And all the while I saw that Marian's eyes never left her sister for more than an instant—the one living mobile feature in that still face of hers—eyes full of pain and anguish and an agony of sympathy and the joy of boundless love, and a fierce passion to ward and guard and protect. They were like a mother's eyes watching her child suffer.

Toward the end of dinner Naïla, alas! asked rather anxiously if the wine was all right, stating (with great truth) that women weren't very good judges of that sort of thing. I stole a desperate look at Henry, and Henry, readiest of gallant liars, said it was excellent. I made polite noises, and the incident, as the politicians say, was closed. We went into the drawing-room, which was at the corner of the flat and had the two magnificent views, for our coffee and tobacco. Naïla took a cigarette—she wasn't allowed more than one—but Marian didn't smoke. It made her head ache.

And then after half an hour or so Naïla went to the grand piano at the far side of the large room and sang for us, first explaining:

"I can only sing in a sort of whisper now, so you must make allowance. Something happened to my throat, you see, and spoiled it."

So almost flippantly she passed over her great tragedy. It was as if the poor child had said: "Something got spilled on a favorite frock of mine, last week, and ruined it. I had to throw it away."

Then she sat down at the piano, where there were no lights, so that Naïla was all but hidden in dim obscurity—a mere vague blur of white in the shadows—and bent her head and played soft, slow chords as if she were dreaming alone in the twilight and putting her dreams—sad ones—into music.

The room was full of a great, hushed, breathy whisper of sound before we even knew that voice had been added to instrument. It was unlike any singing I had ever heard. It was as if a Seraph (one of the celestial contralti) with a voice gigantically adapted to carolling in great heavenly halls, had gone home, after heaven's afternoon concert was over, and was singing to herself in a whisper between the gloaming and the night.

The sheer volume of it was tremendous, if you can speak of the *volume* of a sound from which most of the sound has been extracted so that there is left a sort of ghost, an indescribable, quivering, trembling, golden mist of music with the notes of the piano striking through it like sunbeams through a dusty haze.

One expected any moment that roomful of living breath to turn to resonant tone, and dreaded it, and hoped it wouldn't—the clangor would have been deafening.

She sang the "Chanson d'Automne."

"Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l'Automne
Blessent mon cœur
D'une langeur
Monotone.

"Tout suffocant
Et blême, quand
Sonne l'heure,
Je me souviens
Des jours anciens
Et je pleure.

"Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
Qui m'emporte
Deçà, delà,
Pareil à la
Feuille morte."

The words are Verlaine's, but I don't know who wrote the music—perhaps Naïla herself. It was all slow, sad, majestic, autumnal, melancholy chords—a quiet, poignant tragedy of death in nature and the gloom of death in a shadowed heart. It might have been herself Naïla was singing about.

'Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
Qui m'emporte
Deçà, delà . . ."

Poor drifting, wind-tossed leaf, autumnal before its time—torn from the stem, stricken, yellowed, dried of strength! What was left now at the end of its purposeless wanderings but death such as all autumn leaves must come to?

I smuggled away a surreptitious tear with the end of my little finger, and glanced toward the two other listeners to see if they had caught me. Marian's face was in shadow and couldn't be seen, but Henry sat low in his chair with his chin on his shirt-front, and his eyebrows drawn up at the inner ends, and he had two tears—one better than me—and wasn't making the slightest effort to conceal them. They hung just under his eyelids, one on each cheek, in the plain light of the near-by candles. And his eyes were deep-ringed underneath as people's eyes always look when they are much moved.

We didn't applaud when the song was done, it would have seemed a cackling, strident, palm-smacking insult after those heavenly sounds. We drew, all three, a long, deep breath and waited.

Then Naïla sang another song of Verlaine's, the well-known "Heure Exquise" (that my dear mother had sung so long ago at that well-remembered picnic in Blandford). And this wasn't sad—except with the solemnity that all beauty possesses, if it's beauty at all, and especially the solemn, hushed beauty of a summer night.

And after that she sang once more, the great aria out of "Samson et Dalila"—"Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix," which is probably the most enchanting and enticing and alluring and sorcerous piece of music there is in all the world (the Venusberg motif in "Tannhäuser" not excepted). It is all the allurement and seduction there is between woman and man made vocal, but robbed of its grosser elements. It is seduction made somehow majestic.

And this from the pale lips of poor little Naïla Castle, who hadn't any more real allurement in her fragile body than an invalid child—hardly as much. I should have laughed at the idea of her singing that great song—laughed with tears in my eyes—and hoped she would never try, for I had more than once heard the aria sung by famous ladies of the operatic world, at full blast on a big stage with lovely Oriental settings and a stout Samson to address it to. I was quite sure that I knew how it ought to be rendered, and what kind of a person ought to render it. Yet never before or since has that passionate appeal so thrilled and stirred and overcome me, so wrung my heart with its fervor, as when my Cousin Naïla sang it in her tremendous golden, whispering tones on that evening in September.

One heard an ardent and passionate soul beating its wings against its helpless, pathetic, fragile envelope of weary flesh. One heard the poignant cry of a woman cheated beyond all hope of earthly recovery out of her birthright of womanhood. It was almost too heartrending to be borne.

And if you are inclined to laugh at this and to say that "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix" can't be sung with any success in a breathy *mi-voix*, try it yourself, if you have a fine contralto voice! Sit in the gloaming and pretend that you're a poor half-blind little slip of a white, washed-out, anæmic wreck of a girl who has given up forever all hope of love and a loving mate and conjugal happiness and little children to bear and rejoice in and train upward. Try to imagine that you're all this, and let the bitter revolt in your heart rise to the surface, and then sing Dalila's song in a voice just above a whisper.

You shall see!

At the end my heart was beating in great throbs like the throbs of an engine; not at all with the sort of feeling that Dalila's song might be presumed to inspire if rendered by a real Dalila (or even by a good imitation one), for that kind of thing was unthinkable in connection with poor Naïla, but with sheer astonishment and artistic delight and an enthusiasm too great for words. I looked at Henry, and he was trembling all over, and his cheeks were bright red and his eyes shining. I didn't wonder, for it was the first time he had ever heard that tremendous aria. Incredible as it seems, Henry had never in all his life heard a grand opera. For that matter, he had heard very little serious music of any kind. It wasn't to be had, of course, in Blandford, and, out of sheer ignorance of what real music is, he had never sought it even when it was to be obtained. His experience had

comprised only comic operas and the so-called musical comedies and airs of a better class blared out by brass-bands or by restaurant orchestras. Concerts he had avoided, like disease, because he had been told they were dull.

What an introduction, then, to the gardens of lovely sound! What a momentous opening of unsuspected gates upon unguessed Elysian fields of magic and intoxication and golden enchantment!

And the voice of a siren from within melting his ears and heart with the greatest of all great love-songs!

I don't wonder Henry was swept off his feet.

When the aria was over Naïla got up from the piano, saying:

"Voilà, m'sieurs—dames! le jeu est fini. The nightingale's tired." And came smiling out into the candle-light. I was almost shocked. There she had been singing her very soul out, a poignant and desperate cry, and two minutes afterward smiled as cheerfully as if she had been rendering tunes from the then popular "Belle of New York."

It's a mysterious way great artists have. If they hadn't it, I suppose they would die early or go mad.

I jumped up and caught her by the two hands. They were quite cool and steady—but I wasn't. I could hardly speak. Naïla smiled at me, seeing the wrought-up state I was in (and taking, I hope, some pleasure in it). She said,

"I should have had a nice voice, shouldn't I, dear Bill, if nothing had happened to it?"

But I cried out: "Oh, Naïla, it's perfect—the most wonderful voice I ever heard! I never heard such singing in all my life. You're a great artist."

She laughed at that as if I'd made a joke, but I think she wasn't altogether displeased, because it must have been quite

plain that I was in earnest. And just then Henry came up, still in the clouds and stammering, so I left them together and went across the room to where Marian stood by an open window. She stepped out upon the balcony as I approached, and went a little way along it as if she wanted to be out of hearing from the lighted room. I had seen her face, and it was wrung with agony. She had her cross to bear, as all people have in this world who love very deeply.

Marian gave just one dry, hard sob and put out her hands on the rail of the balcony before her. I took one of them in mine, and it clung to my fingers like a child's hand. This from the stern and unemotional Marian!

She began to weep and to tremble there in the dark.

"Oh, Willie!" she said, "there are times when I think I just can't bear it. It's too much. She's going to die, Willie. She grows thinner and whiter and weaker month by month. I don't know what to do with her. She's going on down and down, and nothing seems to help at all—not all the treatments and all the doctors and all the changes of air and scene. Naïla's going to die!"

I tried to say what comforting words I could think of, but they sounded flat and foolish even to my own ears. Could I doubt that Marian's fears were justified? Could any one doubt after one look at the pallid little wreck of Naïla? So I babbled my awkward sympathy, and presently fell silent, and we stood there for some minutes, I should think, without saying anything.

But then I asked questions, and gradually the whole sad story of my cousins' life since I had seen them in New York came out. They had gone to Leipsic, as they had meant to do, and for the first year everything promised well. Naïla made tremendous progress with her singing and gained a

great local reputation, everybody in the musical world there prophesying that she was to be the next great singer. But it seems the famous Deutsch, her master, got the idea that her voice, while a natural contralto, could be placed higher, so that she might sing soprano rôles in opera (a thing infinitely to be desired if it could be brought about). And so it was attempted, but somehow went wrong, and Naïla began to worry, and broke down once or twice from that and overwork, and she got into a wretchedly anæmic condition. Of course, her voice suffered from her lack of vitality, but Deutsch wouldn't give up, and, to tell it all in a few words, the delicate vocal chords got hopelessly, permanently strained and ruined forever. She couldn't even speak above a whisper for more than a year.

The eye trouble seems to have been a direct result of the anæmia that had fixed upon my poor cousin. It seemed almost incredible to me when Marian told me, but since then I have heard of many other cases—some of them total blindness, which Naïla just escaped. It was hoped, and indeed promised, that if her bodily strength should return, her eyes would be well again. But there was small comfort in that promise, alas!

It was almost at the time of this complete breakdown, I believe, that Naïla's and Marian's father, my uncle, died at last out in Arizona after so long and gallant a battle. (I had guessed at his death, of course, from the mourning they wore.) And this depressed poor Naïla still further, and she blamed herself bitterly for having left him to die alone, even though he had insisted upon it.

And she grew weaker and weaker, and they moved from one place to another, from one great medical specialist to the next, but nothing seemed to be of any avail, and so at

last, eighteen months before this, they had settled down in Paris, in, I imagine, something like despair.

I asked about their present life—what they did, what friends they had, etc., and found that they passed a very quiet existence and had few intimates.

"People bore poor Naïla," Marian said. "They make her nervous. Sometimes she seems glad to meet them, but she tires of them so quickly. I wish she didn't. She would be much better off if she had more to occupy her mind. She'd be cheerfuler, I'm sure. She has such dreadful attacks of nerves. After we'd come home to-day from meeting you and Mr. Trent she went quite to pieces from sheer nervous shock and wept for an hour. You see what even a pleasant surprise can do to her, for she was delighted over meeting you. She's very fond of you, Willie, and has so often spoken of you during the past years. I think poor Naïla has never met any one she liked so well."

Marian told me about a Jewish-German girl, a student of painting whom they had fallen in with in Munich, and who had followed them to Paris—an odd type, I gathered, but sympathetic and one of the very few Naïla could bear to have near her. She was very poor, it seemed, and, after painting blue trees all day in the Luxembourg Gardens, went home to her tiny attic in the Rue Denfert Rochereau and cooked a meagre meal for herself over an oil-stove.

Also they had another very faithful friend, a little half-starved Hungarian pianist who adored Naïla with the humblest of dog-like passions, and came often in the evenings and made lovely music for her that soothed and smoothed and rested her tortured nerves as nothing else in the world could do.

I said I hoped Naïla would be able to endure Henry and

me, and Marian said she hoped so with all her heart, but that I mustn't feel hurt or insulted at anything she might say or do, because it would be all her poor, racked nerves.

We went back into the drawing-room after that to rejoin the others. Henry was still fidgeting about in a great state of redness and excitement and incoherence, but Naïla sat huddled in one corner of a big chair, with her hands pressed tight together, and she looked as if she had been weeping. Marian said, over my shoulder:

"Oh, dear! it's been too much for her. Don't be offended, Willie, but do please get Mr. Trent away. I shall have a dreadful time with that poor child." So I crossed over at once to Naïla and said that Henry and I must be going, and thanked her for having sung so divinely, and said we should expect them at the studio to-morrow. She looked at me with a piteous, frightened look, and from me to Marian and back again, and began to say that she didn't quite know about to-morrow; that she hoped they could come—it would be very nice indeed—and more things of that sort. I was rather taken aback, but Marian, catching my eye, nodded to me, and so I said no more about it then, but thanked her once more for singing and said we must really go.

At the last she quite clung to me, saying over and over what a delightful thing it was that we should have met again after so long. I said that we must manage to see a great deal of each other from now on (which seemed to frighten her once more), and so at last we left, Henry babbling confusedly until the closed door cut off his words behind him.

On the stairs going down he said:

"Hang it, Bill, she cried! The poor little soul burst out weeping. I was almost frightened to death. I wanted to call you and Miss Castle in. I didn't know what to do,

We were just talking about commonplace things—no, I'm hanged if they were commonplace! We were talking about her singing, and that's the most incredible, wonderful, divine thing I ever heard. Heavens, what sounds! We were just talking about that, you see, and I forget what else, and all of a sudden, without the slightest warning, she began to cry. D'you suppose I said anything stupid or wrong? I *can* be an awful ass, you know. Good Lord, it was the most ghastly thing!"

I explained to him it was no fault of his, just nervous fatigue and overstrain on my cousin's part, and told him in a few words what I had been hearing from Marian. That seemed to relieve him from his fear that he had committed some dreadful crime, but I can't say that poor Naïla's misfortunes made very much of an impression on Henry just then. He was in a state of excitement and wonder and exaltation far too extreme for anybody's troubles to touch him, and kept on exclaiming and great-heavensing and waving his arms and making confused noises all the way down the stairs and out into the Avénue de l'Observatoire.

"Great heavens!" cried Henry (for the twentieth time), "why didn't I know there was music like that in the world? Why didn't somebody tell me? Why didn't *you* tell me, you close-mouthed, secretive ass? I s'pose you knew. Great heavens! to think that it has been going on all these years, day after day—sounds like that—sounds to make you catch your breath—to stop your heart beating for sheer delight—to melt the very bones inside of you—and I never found it out till this blessed night! Sacré nom d'une pipe! Sacré nom d'un petit bonhomme! Sacré nom de Dieu!" He all but wept. Then a sudden thought came to him and he stopped under a gas-lamp and pulled out his watch. It

was only ten o'clock, and Henry wanted to dash at once across the river and go to the opera and hear the last acts of whatever was being sung there. I wouldn't let him, and he abused me like a pickpocket, and would be appeased only by my promise that he should be taken to the opera on the very next evening—that he should smuggle in food, and live and sleep there if he chose.

I tried to get him home, for I was depressed and melancholy over poor Naïla, and disinclined for talk, but he wouldn't go, and made me walk up and down the Avénue de l'Observatoire until heaven (upon which he so frequently called) alone knows what hour. He felt it absolutely necessary to tell me what a wonderful thing music was, and about its place among the arts (or rather above them), and what it had done for the world, historically or otherwise, and how it could soothe the savage breast—especially his own—and innumerable other important truths quite as startling and as original as these.

In another mood this extraordinary flood of information might have amused me, but just then it didn't. I was bored and made no secret of it (not that Henry cared for that!). I told him he was a callous, selfish, hard-hearted little rat of a hide-bound egoist, and that he ought to be ashamed of himself to go on raving about *his* discoveries and *his* delight in them and *his* feelings and *his* insides when he had just left the most piteous and hopeless tragedy of a wrecked life that he had ever been privileged to look upon. That brought him round at once, for he was really as tender-hearted and sympathetic a soul as ever walked in the Avénue de l'Observatoire. He begged my pardon and Naïla's, and said I was quite right about him, he wasn't fit to live. He asked a great many questions and said it was

the saddest story he had ever heard, and Naïla the sweetest and most spiritual woman he had ever met, and he nearly wept again, and talked quite touchingly and beautifully about her until I at last got him home to the Rue d'Assas.

I may as well confess that he had his revenge upon me, though he was quite innocent and didn't know at all how he had scored. For, as we were going up-stairs in the pavillon, he said:

"D'you know, old Bill, I think poor little Miss Naïla (what a lovely name!) is by way of cherishing a secret passion for you. I watched her all through the evening and she was quite tremulous when you were about, and bored or hysterical when you weren't. I s'pose you're just the sort of great, hulking, prize-fighting, modern imitation of a blond Greek hero that a little frail slip like that would adore. There's no accounting for taste! Did you, by any chance, observe that she kissed you good-night?" (I had observed it and been touched by it.) "Nobody ever wants to kiss *me* good-night, worse luck!" (Oho! didn't they, though!)

And with that he went off to bed, leaving me in a quite dreadful frame of mind. I said to myself that the idea was preposterous, outrageous—that Henry was as mad as a March hare—as mad as two March hares. I said that poor little Naïla hadn't life enough left in her frail body even to think of such a thing—even to imagine it. Then I remembered how she had sung "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix," and turned cold all over. I cast a hasty and frightened eye backward over all that there had ever been between us and examined it, trying to discover if there had been on Naïla's side anything warmer than a sisterly affection.

It was like asking riddles of the Sphinx. Who shall determine the quality of a woman's feelings—even of a girl's?

I couldn't, for one. I knew only my own heart, and, while that was full of love and affection and tenderness for Naïla Castle, and ached at the sight or thought of her sufferings, still, that love was another kind of love altogether—the true, faithful love of an elder brother, a friend, the closest friend there can be. It wasn't at all what Dalila cried out for.

That side of my poor little cousin simply didn't exist for me. It was unthinkable.

Was it possible that she . . .

I remembered that there had been a time long ago in New York when she had nearly made me turn traitor to the memory of Mary Borrow.

"Oh, Henry's an ass!" I cried, desperately, after some hours of this. "He's a long-eared, braying, mouse-colored, saddle-galled, maniacal ass!" And I rolled over in bed, and laughed a scornful laugh, and determined to think no more about it.

But there was no sleep for W. Castle *that* night.

X

IN spite of Naïla's nervous hesitation my cousins turned up the next afternoon on the hour. I am afraid they found one of their hosts in a somewhat jumpy and preoccupied state, but if so they didn't appear to notice it. They were enchanted with our rus in urbe, the existence of which behind that uninteresting street wall they had never suspected; they thought the big studio delightful and almost too grand, with its old furniture and Persian rugs and panels of tapestry, for a serious working-place; and of the seductions of the garden they couldn't say enough. They hadn't a garden of their own, worse luck! though they looked out upon the Luxembourg itself, and were quite annoyed with us for being so much better off.

"If I only had a little wee one!" Naïla said, pathetically. "Just two green trees and a lilac-bush and a cane chaise-longue. It would be such a lovely place to sit. I have to sit in the Luxembourg on a two-sou iron chair with scores of people walking back and forth in front of me."

Henry and I cried out at the same instant that those days were past forever, and that Naïla must come and sit in our garden. We promised her a cane deck-chair with a foot that pulls out and cushions and rugs and magazines from Brentano's in the Avénue de l'Opéra, and a cat if she wanted one. At first she took it as a joke and thanked us with burlesque emotion, but we were quite serious and told her about it all

over again, and promised never to intrude into her part of the garden, unless she hung out an "at home" signal, and got Marian on our side, and made the scheme sound so sane and sensible that before she knew it she found herself committed. She was quite overcome and so touchingly grateful that we wanted to think up something else at once to do for her, but couldn't.

The poor child was looking ghastly again in the searching daylight—incredibly thin and blue-white and fragile, and of course she had on the ugly goggles once more. She clung to me all the while as if she were afraid of getting lost or as if she found Henry difficult to talk to, and, in view of Henry's dreadful suggestion of the night before (it looked silly enough by sunlight—a sort of cauchemar), I searched, or tried awkwardly enough to search, for evidences of an affection more than sisterly.

I couldn't find any, and called Henry names under my breath.

We had tea in the garden, served by the beaming Mme. Salomon, who had got for the occasion a parcel of the most heavenly little cakes from Nézard, a justly famous maker of the same, who has contributed to the public weal full many a prosperous year in the Rue Notre Dame des Champs.

And, while we were quarrelling over the most delectable and melting of these confections, who should arrive upon the scene, quite unexpected, and as from a cloudless sky, but three callers—the beautiful Lady Crail, under a mauve sunshade, and a still more beautiful and very tall young lady under a red sunshade, and a distinguished gentleman of uncertain age under no sunshade at all.

Henry and I jumped from our chairs with shouts of wel-

come, and I was again kissed on both cheeks by her ladyship (it was becoming almost a habit) and told that they had just arrived in Paris, that very morning, from Aix-les-bains, where she had been taking the cure. I turned to the tall, dark young lady under the red sunshade, who was so very lovely in her splendid proportions and tropical coloring that she well-nigh took my breath away, and waited to be told who she was. Nobody said anything, and the pause was becoming embarrassing when, at length, Lady Crail began to laugh. Then the younger lady smiled at me, crinkling up her eyelids in a well-remembered fashion, and my heart dropped at least two beats for sheer astonishment and delight and an emotion that was almost pain.

"Good heavens!" I cried. "It's Mary! It's Mary Borrow!" She dropped her sunshade on the gravel and I caught both her hands in mine and we laughed together like two children—like two little children fifteen years gone by in dear old Blandford. I could hardly speak.

"May I kiss Mary?" I demanded of her mother. And her ladyship said:

"Certainly not! You're much too grown up and beautiful and dangerous. *I'll* kiss you instead." Which she at once did.

The third caller was Mary's great-uncle (I have told about that odd relationship), Augustus Hayes—or, to be quite formal, Sir Augustus Hayes, Bart., of Milton Priory, Kent. But as he is to be one of us, from now on to the end of this chronicle, we may as well begin now, sans façon, to call him by his proper name, which is "the Bart.," or, in French, "Monsieur le Barte." He was at this time not more than two or three and thirty, but he looked much older, for his hair was streaked with gray and the lines of his face were

already made and permanently established. He looked at least forty if not more, but he had a right to, for he had lived during the past decade a very sad life and it had aged him before his time. When you first met him he appeared rather stern and hard, but, within a few moments, something was sure to make him smile, and then your heart warmed to him at once and never got cool again; for he had the sweetest smile as well as the sweetest nature of any man I ever knew —except perhaps my Uncle George.

"Et son cœur, ravagé par la flamme, a toujours,
Pour qui s'en montre digne un réservoir de larmes."

We made introductions all round, and Lady Crail sat down beside Naïla Castle and proceeded to make herself so charming and gracious and sympathetic that my poor cousin quite forgot her nervous fears, and expanded visibly like a flower under the sunshine, and became quite witty and delightful. I glanced more than once from her to Lady Mary and back again and sighed, for the contrast was almost a cruel one. Against poor Naïla's pathetic frailty Mary Borrow looked all the more rosy and vigorous and magnetic—well-nigh insolent with splendid health and strength.

But I mustn't give the impression here that Mary was one of those offensively over-vigorous and over-healthy young women who dominate every company by sheer force of superabundant vitality. The present scribe has a horror of that amazonian type. Mary didn't belong to the amazon sisterhood—far from it! but she was very tall—five-foot-ten, I believe—and round and strong, and never had been ill in her life, and looked it. With a crescent on her low brow and a bow in her hand she would have made flesh and blood

of my dreams of Artemis, the maiden huntress. Alas! she has made flesh and blood of the dreams of many a poor devil, in her day, has Mary! And, I'm afraid, has gloried in it.

I took her round the garden while the others were chatting together about the tea-table, and asked her a hundred questions about what had happened to her during the past fifteen years, and if she was married or engaged or considering it. Mary said certainly not, that she didn't mean to marry for ages, even if she got a chance, for she was having far too good a time. And she advised me in quite a superior motherly tone not to marry either—not for years yet. It cramped one so, she said.

She was very enthusiastic about Henry's romantic beauty and his big, eloquent eyes and his impressive manners, and asked how he had happened to take up painting as a profession (she knew that he had done so from a letter I had written to Lady Crail giving the studio address and saying that Henry was with me). There seemed to me to be no reason why she shouldn't be told, for Henry wasn't at all disposed to make a secret of it, and so I explained to her Henry's strange obsession, and the extraordinary means he was taking to find a woman whom he believed to exist somewhere in the world.

She was almost inclined to laugh at first, as any one might be, but ended by becoming tremendously excited over the affair.

"How perfectly splendid and mad and romantic!" she said. "To think that there's actually a man in the world at this late, practical day who would do a thing like that. I shouldn't have believed it possible. How splendid of him, Bill! It's quite Early-Renaissance, isn't it? Think of de-

liberately giving up your whole life to a search for a woman who mayn't even exist!—for he must have his hours of horrible doubt, you know. Think of it! And you say he is actually learning to paint well without any talent to begin on? It's quite the most thrilling thing I ever heard of. You *must* let me tell mother. Please let me tell mother! She'll die of enthusiasm. She adores romantic people who really play up."

I said I saw no reason why her mother shouldn't know, but just then Mary had a sudden flash of recollection and cried out:

"Good gracious, me! I've just remembered—those fairy stories of his when we were children in Blandford! It's his *Little Girl* grown up. It's Gray Eyes!" And I said, "Oh yes. It's Gray Eyes, right enough. She has haunted him all this time. I only hope he'll find her. It frightens me to death sometimes. Suppose he doesn't! Suppose after all this work and devotion and sacrifice he never finds her—just goes on, year after year, hoping and searching and growing old. It's horrible to think of."

But Mary wouldn't have it like that at all. She said quite indignantly that such a prodigious effort couldn't possibly fail of its reward, and called me names for being a coward and a doubting Thomas.

The others called to us just then that they were going up to see the studio, and so we followed them. Mary left me at once and clung tenaciously to Henry, eying him with a fascinated stare as if she expected to see in his face or somewhere about his exterior the stigmata of his romantic secret. But Henry, who of course didn't know what it was all for, fancied he had made a tremendous impression and got quite flushed and proud and strutted like a peacock. You

may be sure I spoiled *that* idea as soon as I had him alone.

Lady Crail and Mary and the Bart. (Sir Augustus) left, after a few moments, but not before they had made Henry and me promise to dine with them later on. Her ladyship pressed my cousins to come also, but they refused. Naïla couldn't dine out in public on account of the goggles or bandages she had to wear. And then, when the others had gone, Henry and I walked home the short distance to the Avénue de l'Observatoire with Marian and Naïla, and we made Naïla reiterate her promise to come every pleasant day that remained of the autumn, to sit in the garden with or without her sister's company.

She kept the promise, by-the-way, and was very comfortable and happy there, I think. Marian usually came with her and often remained to read aloud or to sew and talk, but, when she didn't, Naïla lay in the long cane chair for hours at a time as still as a mouse, and if Henry and I were about the place at five o'clock we all had tea together quite like a little family party.

Lady Crail and Mary and the Bart. and Henry and I dined very delightfully that evening at the Pavillon d'Armenonville in the Bois, for the weather was still as warm as mid-summer so that the gay and fashionable resort was crowded with fair women and brave men (I'm sure at least about the women and let us hope for the best in their escorts. They *looked* brave. Anyhow they were bravely dressed).

Lady Crail, in memory, I fancy of that dinner at the Maison d'Or, and my appreciation of it, made me choose what we were to eat and drink, and I was so serious and important and fussy over it that Henry held up his hands, saying:

"Hush! This is a solemn moment. Let no ribald laughter reach his ears!"

He made them all laugh, especially Mary, which spoiled my effect, but we had an excellent dinner, nevertheless, and I won the Bart.'s never-to-be-forfeited respect from that hour.

He knew something about food himself.

It must have been that Mary hadn't found a chance to tell her mother about Henry's romantic quest, for, midway of the evening, Lady Crail asked him how it was that he had happened to go in for painting. Immediately afterward she said "E-e-e-e!" and contorted her face and looked astonished and injured. (Can an irreverent daughter have trodden upon her parent under the table?) Henry said, quite calmly:

"Well, you see, I had to find somebody." And as if that explained the matter perfectly Lady Crail replied:

"Yes, of course. To be sure!" and took a hasty sip of her wine.

I thought the Bart. looked somewhat puzzled, and, to head him off, asked him how long he meant to stay in Paris and if he meant to settle down there to work. He was a sculptor and, I'd heard, a very clever one. He said he did mean to settle down if he could find a decent studio, and remain for the winter at least—perhaps much longer. He had just come from a year in Rome.

I caught Henry's eye and found that the same thought had occurred to us both at the same instant. So we asked the Bart. if he wouldn't like to take the lower studio in our pavillon, explaining that we had no use for it at all and that it was built for a sculptor's workshop (which must be on the ground level on account of the prodigious weight of the

figures). Indeed there still remained in it, as mementos of its last locataire, two water tubs and a big box, like a coal-bin, of dried-up clay. The Bart. was quite taken off his feet by this offer, for he wasn't at all used to the snap-shot American fashion of doing things. He had never before been asked to share a house by people the very first time he met them. However, it was plain to see that he was touched and pleased (as also were Lady Crail and Mary, who thought it very nice indeed of us), and thanked us many times and said he would come the next day to discuss the matter.

There were a number of English people in the restaurant —homeward-bound travellers from Switzerland or the Pyrenees or from Venice (the September moon). Several of them seemed to know Lady Crail very well indeed and smiled and waved their hands at her, or came across to our table to exchange greetings. There was also an august Russian personage who was dining with some English friends, and he too came across the room and bowed with a charming old-fashioned courtesy, and kissed Lady Crail's hand and turned a bright, experienced eye of surprised admiration upon Mary, whom he had never before seen. He was an elderly personage and seemed to think that gave him privileges, for he told her she was, with one exception, the most beautiful woman in Paris—making a little bow to Lady Crail, who was much amused. As he went back to his own table he laid his hand on my arm for an instant and whispered in my ear. They all demanded to know what he had said, but I laughed and wouldn't tell.

Long afterward I confessed to Mary that the Grand Duke had said he retracted the exception. He couldn't have paid her a higher compliment.

We stayed rather late, I remember, and when the crowd had thinned a little suborned the Spanish orchestra and made it play our favorite airs—among them Dalila's great song out of "Samson," through which Henry sat with bowed head as if it were some sort of religious ceremony, but afterward sighed, and remarked that it wanted singing.

I may say here that in spite of the sudden late birth in him of that passion for good music he never became very enthusiastic over instrumental harmonies, not even the violin under the bow of a master—Sarasate, Joachim, Ysaye. It was the singing voice that he adored, and could listen to forever, and nearly die of ecstasy the while.

Altogether I think we had the best of good times on that evening—or as Henry put it in the words of the Western newspaper—"A perfectly good time was had by all." I was sorry it had to end (I always am). But we came away at last and divided into unequal halves to drive back to the Bristol, where the ladies and the Bart. were staying. Lady Crail and I—as we had done the year before—went together, and Henry and the Bart. with Mary Borrow. I had been hoping it might arrange itself otherwise, but, in any case, I couldn't have had Mary alone, so it wouldn't have done me much good.

On the way I told her ladyship what I had already told Mary about Henry Trent, and she was enchanted, as Mary had said she would be, but also a little dismayed and pitiful because she couldn't believe that Henry's astonishing quest would ever arrive at anything, and she was afraid he'd break his heart over it.

In return she told me what it was that had made the Bart. old and worn before his time. It seemed he had married, nearly ten years before, a very beautiful girl, whom he

adored, but there had been insanity in her family and it began to show in odd, trivial ways in her not long after the marriage. She wasn't used to artists and couldn't understand why the poor Bart. had to have models—undraped models especially. She became furiously jealous of them, and made her husband's life quite a burden, though he seems at first to have borne her attacks with wonderful patience. He was a serious sculptor, and of course had to do his work—or thought he had to—and so, before long, there came between the two, who really loved each other devotedly, an absolute breach, all over that silly matter of the harmless necessary model. Lady Hayes left her husband and went to live alone, and refused to make peace with him, though he tried hard to manage it. Then she fell ill and had a fever, and when the fever was past it was discovered that the poor lady was quite out of her mind—hopelessly, and, in the opinion of the doctors, permanently insane. It nearly drove the Bart. mad also, for he blamed himself, and said that he had done worse than murder. He too fell ill and had to be taken south to Cannes for a winter, and suffered tortures of agony and remorse, and knew that no suffering could ever undo what had been done. And that is the bitterest pain there is in this world.

He wouldn't touch a sculptor's tool for nearly three years, but, in the end, the call was too strong, and he took up his work where he had left it off and toiled all the harder to stifle thought.

He was, Lady Crail said, one of the best and truest men in the world, and she hoped he would come to live with Henry and me—it would be a gain for all three of us.

Then she asked about my cousins—Marian who had glowered at her so silently and the poor, pathetic Naïla, for whom

she had taken an immediate liking. So I had to tell *their* sad story, which affected her deeply. Altogether that drive in from the Bois was a sort of *Arabian Nights* performance, Lady Crail and I alternating in the rôle of Scheherazade. We laughed over it as we turned into the Place Vendôme.

The Bart. came the next day to the Rue d'Assas, as he had promised, and we looked at the ground-floor studio together. It was exactly the sort of place he wanted, though he hadn't ever hoped to find anything so good, because sculptors' studios are usually mere sheds in a dirty alley somewhere—mere boxes with a north light but with no conveniences at all, not even water very often, so that you have to fetch it in pails from the common tap in the court-yard. This one was an atelier de luxe, with water laid on, and admirable light, and a bedroom at one end, and a kitchen at the other. It was bare, of course, and the floor had never been clean since the first bath of clay and water had been soused over it, but that is one of the things a sculptor has to put up with. He may be godly, but he can't be clean, any more than a little boy making mud-pies can.

The Bart. was as pleased as Punch, and said at once that he considered himself very lucky indeed to get such a palatial workshop in such a heavenly garden and with such good company overhead. Henry and I should have been very glad to have him there as our guest, but he wouldn't listen to that, and insisted upon paying half the rent, pointing out, reasonably enough, that he was to occupy half the premises. He was very well off, and we made no great objection. So he sent in a lot of things that very afternoon—model-stands and turn-tables, and wire and rods for skeletons, and a box of tools, and a great quantity of clay. At first he meant to

sleep there, but afterward decided that it was too damp, and so got a room in the house on the street, high up, au quatrième, where his windows overlooked the Luxembourg.

We saw Lady Crail and Mary, at least *I* did, and usually Henry and the Bart. as well, every day of their visit, but that wasn't for long, as they stayed in Paris only a week. And every time he saw the beautiful Mary Borrow the more certain was William Castle that she was the most beautiful being in all this world, and the wittiest, and the most alluring, and the most fugitive and elusive and inaccessible and maddening and altogether adorable. For she was no easy prey —not Mary! She'd been courted and pursued by many better men than I—men of high degree and low, but chiefly high—and the wretched child had loved every step of every one of those pursuits, and hoped there would be a lot more of them. She gave me many a heart-ache in that brief week, but then she had a way of soothing heart-aches which was all her own and was the rapidest relief ever administered—even if it wasn't a permanent cure.

I hate to call names, but I am very much afraid Lady Mary Borrow was as natural a coquette as ever slew with a glance.

Lady Crail, that wise judge of men and maids (and most other things), looked on and was diverted, but, I think at bottom, a little uneasy. She spoke to me once—on the day before they were to leave Paris. We had been lunching, I remember, at the Pavillon Bleu at St. Cloud, and were walking afterward in the park, Mary and the Bart. some distance ahead of us. Henry wasn't there. She said:

"Dear Willie, I'm very, very fond of you—much fonder than you've any idea, and I want to save you pain and trouble if I can. I've been watching you and Mary, and you're on the very edge of falling in love with the brat . . ."

"On the edge of it!" I cried. "Good heavens! I'm over-ears in it." But she shook her head.

"No, you're not. Men always think that. But you *are* in danger, and I want to warn you away. In the first place you're much too young to marry anybody, or to entangle yourself in an engagement, or even to let any woman seriously enter your thoughts. You're not even at the beginning of your career yet, dear Willie. I'm as sure as anything that you're going to be a great painter, one day, but all that takes time and study, and ought to have one's whole, undivided attention. You'd be very foolish to hang millstones about your neck now. You see that, don't you?

"And besides, I've Mary to consider. I'm a worldly, managing, scheming, ambitious old mother, dear Willie, and I have views for Mary that she doesn't know anything about. At least I hope she doesn't. Young Archie Fellowes, who's a cousin of the Duke of Belford and heir to the title—for the poor young Duke is an invalid and will never have any children—was very attentive to Mary at St. Moritz last winter, and told Crail he'd give his head to marry her. He's one of the nicest young men in the world (though not so nice, by half, as you are, Willie), and Mary liked him. Frankly I should be glad if a marriage might arrange itself there. Mary ought to have a real place in the world. The child is clever and active and makes friends easily and has executive ability. She'd be a splendid duchess.

"You see, my dear," said Lady Crail, laying her hand on my arm—"you see, we're English people, and we love our country and all its works—good or bad. Both Crail's family and mine have always had a hand in—in making the world go round—and I should like that to continue—especially since we've no son. Mary has to be both son and daughter

to us, and I want her to play as important a part in her country as she can. I don't want her to leave it altogether. You see what I mean, don't you?"

"Oh, dear Lady Crail!" I cried with something like a groan. "Of course I see what you mean. Heavens, yes! And when you put it like that, what in the world can I say back to you? I know well enough that Mary is far too beautiful and clever and accomplished for the likes of a poor painter-man—a mere sub-beginner, a student, a rapin of Julian's. It was sheer madness—presumptuous star-gazing—for me even to look up to her, but I have, and I can't ever look anywhere else, now. Of course I mustn't hope for anything. I know that. I don't believe I ever *did* hope. I think I've just adored without ever thinking of the future at all. You see I've loved Mary ever since we were seven years old and she kissed me in my mother's drawing-room. There's never really been any one else for me, and I'm quite sure there never will be. But I'm no match for Mary Borrow. I know that well enough. She'd laugh at the idea."

"I'm not so sure of that," said her ladyship. She took my arm as we walked slowly up that long green allée under the trees, and pressed close against it, and once she put up her hand and patted my cheek. I verily believe that painful scene hurt her as much as it hurt me.

"You're not a young man to laugh at, Willie. Oh, dear me! I wish I could make myself quite, quite clear. I sound so vulgarly ambitious and cheap and mean!

"Willie, it isn't that you're not good enough in either character or station. A good painter is as good as anybody, nowadays. The idiotic prejudices against an artist have quite gone out, and thank Heaven for it! Isn't Augustus a

sculptor? No, it isn't that, at all. Mary could marry you without losing caste—and she couldn't marry a better man. I'll say that for you, my dear! It's another thing altogether that I'm thinking of. It's one's duty to one's country and to the institutions of it. Frankly, I think Mary has the necessary qualities to wield great influence in a high position —to do important work. We Englishwomen think a great deal of that, you know. You haven't quite the same thing in America, have you? I haven't a son to give my country, but I have a daughter, and I want her to be useful. Am I still obscure?"

"Dear Lady Crail," said I, "you were never obscure from the beginning. I quite understand, and I'm sure Lady Mary was meant for such a career as you speak of. Heaven forbid that I should ever try to entice her away from it! I sha'n't, I promise you.

"So that's settled and done with—if there ever was anything to settle, which I doubt."

Her ladyship pressed my arm again very affectionately and said I'd taken it all in just the noble way she was sure of beforehand. But it was plain to see that she was very much relieved, and that a great weight was off her mind. Alas! it had tumbled from her mind to my heart, and though I tried the best there was in me to show a smiling face, I fancy even Mary knew that something had happened—perhaps guessed vaguely at its nature, for all the way in, on the Suresnes boat, she was very sweet and considerate of me, and never teased me once.

And we talked of Blandford and the Golden Age.

XI

ON the evening of that same day—their last in Paris—we had a party for Lady Crail and Mary in the studio. They had asked that it should be a Bohemian party, and it was—as Bohemian as the circumstances would permit—a washed and Bowdlerized Bohemia.

I must say that the studio looked very pretty, with all signs of toil pushed out of sight, and the rugs down, and a lot of candles alight in sconces against the wall or in candlesticks set wherever there was a place to set them. It occurs to me that I have made no attempt to describe this interior in detail, and so I'll try now. It was a rectangular room, an oblong, thirty feet by forty—very spacious, as you see. We had found the walls newly rough-plastered and left white, so that the locataire could choose his own tint. We chose none at all, but left the plaster as we had found it, in the Italian style; and on the middle of each end wall we hung one of my three big square panels of Flemish tapestry, all dull greens and faded blues and yellows. They were enormously effective. The north wall, under the great, long, inclined top-light, had four windows, in groups of two, that opened on a balcony, and in the daytime were covered by heavy curtains—as the top-light could be also, altogether, or by degrees, as one chose. Between the two pairs of windows we put a long, low divan, with cushions covered by the same stuff as the curtains—it was dull green, and looked like vel-

vet, but wasn't. Also there was another long, low seat across the room against the south wall, and above this hung the third of the tapestry panels, the biggest one, suspended from the railing of a balcony. And this was almost all the decoration we had.

The sleeping-room doors opened, one near each end of the studio, in the south wall, and they weren't as high-ceiled as the studio, so the balcony extended across the top of them. There were one or two tables of heavy black oak, and a piano with a Spanish altar cloth across it at one end of the room, and a few good chairs, and that was all, save the rugs on the floor, which were treasures collected by my father long ago—one of them would have made you gnash your teeth with envy, for it was a huge Hispano-Moresque, with a dull gleam of silver thread all through the ground; the others were a sixteenth-century Ispahan in old rose and gold, a "white" Saraband, and a Kermanshah.

In winter we had to make the place hideous with two little cylindrical stoves and their towering pipes, but at the time of this party they were far in the future. Heaven be thanked for it!

That is as good a photograph as I can make for you, in words, of Henry's and my studio in the Rue d'Assas. I have painted it in pictures much better, and you may have seen some of these. If you see them again you will recognize the place by the plain, white-plastered Italian walls and the big squares of tapestry on them.

Lady Crail and Mary came early to the party, her ladyship very gracious and magnificent in black velvet and pearls (for I had begged her to do her utmost); Mary, more radiantly beautiful than I have any halting words for, in rose and gold. And she was still very gentle and sweet with me and looked

upon me with such tender regret for my pain that I could have wept. It was much harder to bear than her laughing coquetry would have been.

Marian and Naïla came, Marian in black once more, and Naïla in the same white and green as at her dinner-table, a week before—hair fillet, bandage, and all. They had brought, by request, their two friends, the German girl from Munich and the little Hungarian pianist. The Münchener lady was one of the oddest types I have ever seen. Henry rudely said she looked like a rolled-up umbrella with a crook handle, for she wore unrelieved black, and was very tall and thin, and incredibly flat in figure, and did her hair close to her head, and had a large, outstanding nose. Her eyes were fine and expressive, however, and in full face she wasn't at all ugly, just rather plain. Henry did her an injustice.

The Magyar pianist was a little, excitable man, all hair and waterfall tie and lovely music. So much for him!

We had asked Laplace and Meunier from Julian's, and they accepted with alacrity and came early, and were, as might be expected, a huge success. The gigantic and hirsute Laplace, when invited, took me a little aside and held me by the arm with the first and last touch of embarrassment I (or, I think, anybody) ever detected in him. He wished to inquire if the soirée was to include grandeur among its other charming qualities, for it seemed he found himself at the moment without a dress-coat. I thought this very pathetic, and wondered if the man had ever owned such a garment, but waited with interest, for I knew there would be something extraordinary in the way of explanation.

He told me the old story (American by origin, I think) of the one dress-coat and the three men—including a corpse

—and the funeral. I had heard it many times, but I rather think Laplace fancied he was inventing it. Anyhow, he told it magnificently, with a breadth and depth and a sureness of touch and a wealth of tone which made it a veritable masterpiece of fiction and himself a master (if he hadn't been that long before). It was like a great musician at the piano rolling and thundering out some cheap street song, and making you think Bach wrote it, and bringing tears to your eyes. I forget whether it was the corpse who got the dress-coat in Laplace's variant of this familiar yarn, or the other man who went to the funeral in it and never came back. Anyhow, Laplace wished to know if he could come to the party en type de Boul' Miche, and I assured him that nothing he could do would give the English ladies more pleasure, for they adored la Bohème and slept with a volume of Murger under their pillows.

So he appeared in a velvet jacket and very wide, baggy trousers and a red sash—very much as he appeared daily at Julian's, only cleaner. But Meunier, as might have been expected, was a true lily of the field in the most exquisitely fitting of coats, with his shoulders padded in little, high points, and shirt-front of innumerable soft plaits, and a white silk waistcoat, and pumps on his feet, and an eye-glass over the left eye. Laplace affected to be stricken by open-mouthed wonder, and stalked him round the walls of the room, exclaiming in a stage-whisper:

"Mon Dieu, que c'est beau, ça! Sainte Vierge! jamais je n'ai vu splendeur pareille." He would ask people in the same loud, excited whisper who the magnificent gentleman was, nodding his head, and opining:

"Sans doute c'est une espèce de prince de quelque part—ou plutôt un milliardaire Péruvien." Finally he demanded

of me that I present him, and so I introduced the two, who gravely shook hands, Laplace bowing low with humility. But when he heard the name he gave a dramatic start and exclaimed:

"Comment, donc! Monsieur Meunier de l'Institut? M. Meunier, Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur?" And stammered a quantity of humble appreciative compliments and insisted upon calling Meunier "Cher maître" all through the evening.

We had begged the Bart. to ask any of his friends who he thought might be amused; but, on the short notice given, he had happened upon but one—an odd type, he warned us—a man he had known in his student days, a fellow who looked an awful ass, but wasn't, really. But when this person arrived, fancy our astonishment to see before us, once more, the æsthete who had danced so marvellously well at our picnic in Blandford, fifteen years gone by, the man called Jellaby. He hadn't changed by so much as the blanching of a single black hair, and he still wore velvet clothes—but not knickerbockers—and a waterfall tie, and made beautiful gestures with his long, white hands.

Jellaby was as overcome as we at this unexpected meeting after so many years, and almost forgot to look wan in his surprise, and abased himself before Lady Crail, who, to his delight, remembered him perfectly, and asked him how Beauty was coming on.

There was a pleasant, dilettanteish young man about the Quarter at this time, called Fordyce (but no relation to the Fordyces in Blandford). He had a studio in the Impasse du Maine, where, in between his other amusements, he made very bad black-and-white drawings of beautiful ladies or

groups of people in drawing-rooms or street scenes or fights. (He also worked occasionally at Julian's.) We had met him at the club on the Quai Conti (to which Henry and I had recently been elected—the Bart. was an old member), and had liked him because he was always ready to do anything that promised amusement. He seemed to know everybody everywhere, and to have been in all corners of the earth. I may as well state here that though he professed to be preparing himself for the career of magazine illustrator, he was really a wolf in sheep's clothing—"a chiel amang us takin' notes"—for not long after this—a couple of years, perhaps—we began to find ourselves and our humors and our failings and the things we said or did faithfully reproduced in certain stories in the American and English magazines. We set up a shout for the gore of this meanly deceptive person, but he had fled, and was laughing at us from a distance—from London or New York or Melbourne or Tokio or Tahiti.

Fordyce came to our party, bringing with him, by permission, a very tall and spectacularly beautiful young Russian lady—the Countess Samaroff. She was even taller than Lady Crail and Mary (both of whom, by-the-way, she had met in London), and had bright-yellow hair, and eyes exactly the color of absinthe after it has curdled in the glass, and a straight, high nose, and a short, full mouth painted very red. She wore a dress of ivory satin, with gold here and there, and topazes for jewels, and she walked like an animal of the cat tribe.

There is the list of our guests. It wasn't a long list; it had to make up in quality what it lacked in size—and I think succeeded. Anyhow, it was as wild a mixture as could easily have been got together, and Lady Crail was delighted.

I asked her what she would like to have happen, and she said she didn't care.

"They all look as if they could do something amusing. Make them do it!"

So I asked the little Hungarian if he would play for us. He seemed quite pleased to be asked, and went at once to the piano and played gypsy music with strange, wild, rolling chords, and unexpected breath-catching intervals, and oases of lovely melody in a wilderness of terrific sound. He had a great success, and, as an encore, played two of the familiar Brahms' "Hungarian Dances." But they sounded tame and conventional beside the true native music. Perhaps the little Magyar had a sense of humor, and meant them to.

After that Lady Crail persuaded Jellaby, the æsthete, to repeat the astonishing pas seul he had danced fifteen years before in Blandford. He was rather shy about it (I think the presence of Laplace and Meunier—old acquaintances of his, by-the-way—frightened him. It meant dancing before a jury of experts). But in the end he overcame his fears and acquitted himself very well indeed, to the noisy delight of everybody, especially Laplace, who said:

"Jamais je n'ai vu son pareil, vous savez, ni a l'Opéra, ni au Bal Bullier. C'est superbe." And *that* had a great success, too.

This genial and bearded ruffian had been sitting at the feet of Mary Borrow, and making innocent, jeune fille conversation with such effortless fluency that you might have thought he knew no other. I saw Mary urging him to something, and Laplace protesting with exaggerated coyness. But at last he called across to Meunier:

"How about singing les 'Vêpres siciliennes'! hein, cher maître?"

My heart stood still with cold horror, and I was on the point of springing to my feet and protesting shrilly—throttling the two of them, one with each hand—committing justifiable homicide—anything at all, before those lurid blasphemies should bellow and squeak among us. It was agony wasted, for our two ingenious friends, with pious upturned faces, rendered their famous (well-nigh classic) performance, substituting goody-goody little nursery phrases of such innocence that the "Sicilian Vespers" were even funnier than they had been at Julian's, and Lady Crail nearly died of laughter. But when the duet was over, Laplace, who had seen my face of horror, directed upon me a solemn wink before he turned to receive Mary Borrow's hysterical congratulations.

Fordyce had no parlor tricks, neither had the Bart. nor Henry nor I, but the Countess Samaroff, without much urging, went to the piano and sang the "Chanson des Ingénues." Not even Mme. Yvette Guilbert could have done it better or with a more comic demureness—a capital performance. I put the words down because they are funny, but not half so funny as when sung—"with the tongue in the cheek."

"Nous sommes les Ingénues,
Aux bandeaux plats, à l'oeil bleu,
Qui vivons presque inconnues,
Dans les romans qu'on lit peu.

"Nous allons entre lacées
Et le jour n'est pas plus pur
Que le fond de nos pensées,
Et nos rêves sont d'azur.

"Et nous courons par les prés
Et rions et babillons
Des Aubes jusqu'aux vesprées,
Et chassons aux papillons.

"Et des chapeaux de bergères
Défendent notre fraîcheur,
Et nos robes—si légerès—
Sont d'une extrême blancheur;

"Les Richelieux, les Caussades,
Et les chevaliers Faublas
Nous prodiguent les œillades,
Les saluts et les 'hélas!'

"Mais en vain, et leurs mimiques
Se viennent casser le nez
Devant les plis ironiques
De nos jupons détournés;

"Et notre grandeur se raille
Des imaginations
De ces raseurs de muraille
Bien que parfois nous sentions

"Battre nos cœurs sous nos mantes
A des pensers clandestins,
En nous sachant les amantes
Futures des libertins."

I thought Lady Crail looked a little nervous during the last stanza, as if she didn't quite know what was coming

next, and somewhat relieved when she found it was the end; but she applauded as gayly as any one else, and I think the only person in the room who was really shocked was that stern moralist, Laplace.

Then the tall, flat, German girl got out her guitar, which she had brought, and sang "Malbrouck s'en va t'en Guerre" in a deep, manly voice, a veritable basso-profundo—the most astonishing pitch I ever heard from a woman. It was an unpretentious performance, for she had had no training at all, and owed its value, if it had any, solely to its incredible depth in scale.

Then, last and best, Naïla sang for us two little sombre German songs for the contralto voice, and "Solveig's Lied" out of "Peer Gynt," which isn't for the contralto at all, but for a high, pure soprano, as cold and clear as the Norwegian skies. It is one of the loveliest of all songs and one of the most familiar, but Naïla's vast, rich, whispering tones lent a warmth and passion to it that made it altogether new to me, and wild and wonderful and strange and heartbreaking.

Henry was overcome, I could see it, but so, for that matter, were all of us, and, after a long, breathless silence, it was very sweet to me (I hope also to the singer) to hear the exclamation of astonishment and delight that broke out on all sides. Lady Crail went across to my cousin and kissed her very warmly and said she had never before been so affected by singing in all her life. I heard Laplace exclaim:

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mais c'est de la musique, ça! Une voix merveilleuse, vous savez." And the little Hungarian wept tears, and kissed Naïla's hands, and stammered no one knew what adoring words in his own tongue.

The Bart. dropped a furtive tear also. I saw him making away with it.

So poor little Naïla had a most emphatic success, and was made much of by everybody, and I hoped was cheered a little by it. Marian was, I know. Her eyes glowed with pride and pleasure.

Then we had things to eat and drink—served by Mme. Dufaure, our femme de ménage, and a friend of hers, brought in for the occasion, and afterward rolled the rugs out of the way, and wound up the evening with an informal dance.

There was still a number of the others present when Lady Crail and Mary made their adieus, so I couldn't escort them across the river to their hotel. The Bart. did that. But I went with them to their carriage down through the gloom of the garden. Mary walked beside me, and once, in the darkest part of the long brick path, she held my arm with both her hands, and squeezed it, and patted it, and said in my ear, "Dear old Bill!"

Heigh-ho!

"Comme la vie est amère!" as Laplace used to say at Julian's when he was feeling unusually gay.

I stood alone there in the dark of the garden for a little while and then went back up-stairs to the studio, where I found our other guests in the bustle of departure. Laplace and Meunier wrung my hand warmly, and said it had been the most delightful of all evenings. Meunier was quite overcome by the aristocratic grandeur of Lady Crail and the gigantic English loveliness of her daughter. I think he looked upon Henry and me with a new respect from that day. But Laplace, in his baggy trousers, en type du Boul' Miche, hadn't been in the least overcome by anything—save, perhaps, the magnificent singing and the frail, pathetic charm of little Naïla Castle.

The Russian lady, with her mouth painted red, had backed Henry into a corner and was telling him where she lived and how rude it would be of him not to come and call upon her, but Fordyce got her away at last, and immediately afterward my cousins left with the tall German girl and her guitar, and the little Hungarian, who was going to see them all to their doors.

So our party ended.

XII

AFTER that week of pleasant dissipation we all settled down, harder than ever, to the season's work both at Julian's and at the studio in the Rue d'Assas. Henry, more or less under my direction, was learning to use paint, and finding it no joke (though he still confined himself, at the school, to charcoal-drawings). The Bart. began to set up a life-size figure which was to be called "Chagrin de Vie"—a young woman, once of great beauty and spirit, who had tasted all the pleasures of life and found them, in the end, sour and bitter and dry, and had lost the bloom of her loveliness, and was disillusioned and tired—sick of everything. He had found, over in Montmartre, an excellent model, a girl once famous in all the studios for her beauty—the queen of the Quat'z Arts ball a couple of years past—but who had lost first her head and then her hold, and had slipped down the ladder, rung by rung, until she wasn't in demand any more as a model—not by the better sort of painters at least. But she was exactly the type the Bart. wanted, and he was full of enthusiasm about her (that impersonal enthusiasm of the artist which can be almost brutal even in the best of men), and worked away at his mud-slinging like a clay-bespattered demon.

I had got interested in the fascinating values of different kinds of white when brought into relation with each other, and spent my early afternoon hours painting elaborate ar-

rangements of still life in which every object was white, but each of a different quality and texture and orient from the others. This, however, is so highly technical a subject that I spare you any discussion of it here, though I should like to go on for hours, for I have ideas that burn to be uttered.

Our indoor life at this time was made easier for us by a long spell of rainy weather which began about mid-October and stripped the trees in the garden and soaked the earth until it smelled very autumnal indeed—almost wintry. So poor Naïla was driven from her retreat, and the chaise-longue and the tea-table were stowed away for the winter in the down-stairs bedroom that the Bart. didn't use. I well remember a brief conversation I had with Naïla on the last warm fair afternoon when she sat at ease under the acacias, with the yellow leaves dropping about her and a rug over her feet. In a fashion it marks, to me, the beginning of a new epoch.

We had been talking about Henry's progress in painting, and, when that bade fair to come to a halt as a topic of interest, I asked her, point-blank (I'd been waiting for the chance), why she didn't like him.

"He has noticed it himself," I told her. "He spoke to me about it some days ago, and was very sorry and regretful. He wondered if he'd done anything you didn't like." And then I went on to tell her what a fine and noble character Henry was (not sparing the gilt), what good friends they might become if she would only meet him half-way, and how he needed women friends, as he really hadn't any at all. I assured her that she might be a splendid influence in Henry's life if she would.

But when I had finished Naïla just said, looking away from me:

"I don't dislike him, Willie. Believe me! I don't." She said it so low that I had to bend forward to hear her, and all at once I noticed that her chin was trembling, as it always did when she was under a severe nervous strain.

The truth came over me like a sudden flash of light! I was aghast and didn't know what to say or do. Poor little Naïla! So that was why she had been avoiding Henry and turning away from him to talk to just any one else when we were all together about the tea-table, and never letting her veiled or goggled eyes meet his if she could help it.

Poor little Naïla who, I had fatuously imagined, was so far removed from love and all its works by her anæmic, pathetic frailty! In that moment I could have murdered Henry for the cursed romantic beautv that he couldn't help and didn't want and never even realized the existence of.

If there had been the remotest chance of his caring back! But I knew him too well for that. I'd had all too good a reason for being sure that he never even thought of the child as an ordinary human being—looked upon her, rather, as a sort of almost disembodied spirit that was gentle and sweet and pitiable—and made heavenly music.

The tragedy of it for poor Naïla, who had had quite tragedy enough already in her short life!

I was completely at a loss, but it seemed to me that something had to be done, and I grasped at the first straw that came to hand. I told her, in as natural a voice as I could command, so that she shouldn't suspect I had noticed anything, what I had already told Mary Borrow and Lady Crail about Henry.

She had known it all the while! It seemed Henry had told her that first evening in the Avénue de l'Observatoire after dinner, while Marian and I were talking on the balcony.

He had the most casual habit of imparting his incredible story to almost any one, as if it were quite commonplace and unremarkable. He had altogether overcome or outgrown his shyness about it (I never knew which), and seemed surprised when people showed astonishment or incredulity. That mysterious presence had become so normal and commonplace a part of his daily life that, I dare say, it was difficult for him to realize that he wasn't just like other people.

Then Naïla talked quite beautifully about Henry, and about the single-hearted devotion with which he was giving all his life and heart and hope and strength to the one task of finding his ideal mate. She thought him incredibly noble and knightly—a sort of modern Galahad pursuing the misty face of a magical lady through the world—a lone survival of a simpler, finer age. (Henry would have been overcome by his own worth and qualities if he could have heard!) She said she couldn't imagine that such a man should want the friendship of a little, white, washed-out, half-alive ghost like herself, but if he did she would be proud to give it.

"At any rate," she said, pathetically, "I can sing to him. He likes that. I'm glad to have even the whisper that's left of my voice, if it can give him pleasure."

Perhaps she feared she had gone a little too far there, and had betrayed herself, for she glanced up at my face for a quick instant with those masked eyes of hers (it gave one the oddest, most helpless feeling!) and laughed.

"I like to give people pleasure, you know, Bill. It isn't often I can, nowadays, alas! And such a virgin musical field as Henry Trent. . . . Heavens! I didn't know there was anybody in the world who knew so little about music.

He's like a child hearing it for the first time. It fascinates me to watch him . . . and to stir him up."

Henry himself called down from the studio balcony just then to say that it was five o'clock—tea-time—and that he was coming, and, a few moments after, the Bart. appeared, carefully examining his hands to make sure the clay had all been washed off. So I had no more confidential talk with Naïla that day; but I watched her manner with Henry to see if there was any change in it, and there was. She was a little self-conscious and nervous, but much more friendly than ever before, and Henry was quite openly delighted, and told me afterward that Naïla seemed to be overcoming her dislike of him.

Sometimes, of a rainy, late autumnal afternoon when there wasn't a good working light, or we felt stale from too much application, or just lazy for no particular reason, the Bart. and I would lay down our tools and take Henry, loudly protesting, between us and cross the river to the Louvre, where we would wander for hours before the masterpieces of great dead painters, and point out to one another how much greater they were than any one now living or yet to be born. And we would explain to Henry (who had his ears back and didn't want it explained—wanted, in fact, to go away home or to a café or into the streets—anywhere) just how masterly and complex, and at the same time how simple, were the enormous compositions of Veronese, how inimitable the golden glow of light upon flesh that Titian alone knew the secret of, how subtly the heads of Rembrandt's portraits grew out of darkness and modelled themselves before the eye.

There is, I am afraid, no doubt at all that Henry was

bored. It wasn't quite that he did not care for pictures. He liked them when they were pretty (especially lovely portraits of ladies), or when they told some interesting or dramatic story. (Henry should have been English!) In other words, he liked them exactly as the uncultivated man-in-the-street likes pictures—for their immediate, obvious, outside qualities. He never got below the skin of them, and never wanted to. He didn't even know there was anything below the skin, and that puzzled the Bart. and me very much indeed, and saddened us, and made us shake our heads over him, and thank Heaven we were not as he.

How the pride of two young pharisees had to humble itself in the dust, later on!

The one exception Henry made to this general and sweeping lack of interest was the oddest imaginable. He discovered Ribera, one day! We found him standing before one of that third-rate master's violent and melodramatic figures in a great state of excitement, and he demanded quite indignantly to know why he hadn't been introduced before to this most masterly of all the world's painters. He told us at great length how wonderful Ribera was, and got more and more excited and intoxicated with his own eloquence, and waved his arms about, and almost attracted a crowd.

Of course we jeered at him and at his peculiar choice in masters, and told him how very much better So-and-so had handled that very problem of light and shade; but Henry wouldn't even listen. He called us a pair of gabbling red and green prigs of parrots who cackled what we had heard about pictures, and hadn't the brains or the courage to pick anything out for ourselves. He said he was going to get a permission to copy, and a canvas, and an easel, and come

here and learn to paint. The first three of these things he certainly did. He gave up, for a fortnight or three weeks, his work at home and devoted his early afternoons to copying Ribera. I couldn't help thinking he might have gone to a better source; but who am I that I should say what food a great man shall nourish himself upon? Long afterward, when I saw those five immortal canvases of his, and studied them well, and abased myself before them, I could detect the Ribera influence. There was something of the old Spaniard in the peculiar, almost violent vividness that made them so startlingly alive.

But at that time the good Bart. and I were shocked in our tenderest sensibilities. We washed our hands of Henry and passed by on the other side, and went down-stairs to sit before the lovely Venus of Milo and sigh deep sighs over that famous lady's autumnal and somewhat mature perfection.

For *we* knew what art was, the Bart. and I did, and pitied those who didn't, and hoped they would learn as they grew older, but doubted it; and so went out to Columbin's for tea, and eyed the Venuses of Milo there in their Rue de la Paix clothes, and thought them very nice indeed.

Later on in the year, when the days grew so short that there was an hour, or even two, between the time work had to stop and the blessed delights of dinner, I would put on rubber-soled tennis shoes and go down-stairs and soundly trounce the Bart. at "la boxe"—or, mayhap, get trounced myself, for the Bart. could wag a fist with the best of them, and was quick as lightning, though he hadn't my height or weight or reach. The model from Montmartre—"Mlle. Chagrin" we called her—adored to watch these gladiatorial combats, and got quite excited over them, and jumped up

and down on the model-stand, cheering on the Bart.'s efforts, and quite beside herself with delight when he won the bout. But if he didn't she nearly wept and said it wasn't fair, because I was bigger. The Bart. had to lecture her severely about this noisy partisanship, and she took his reproofs with the utmost meekness and was still as a mouse for nearly half an hour, but not longer, for, to Henry's and my amusement, she had conceived a violent and not at all secret passion for her employer, who didn't reciprocate it in the least, and was annoyed and embarrassed and all but sent her away before the "Chagrin de Vie" was finished.

Henry came down sometimes to see these boxing-matches and once in a while put on the gloves himself, but he was no man of his hands, and hated to be knocked about (though when angry he fought like a demon). But when the gloves were laid aside and the fencing-masks put on, then he had his revenge, for he was one of the best and most natural swordsmen, whether with foil or épée, that I ever met. It was his one enthusiasm among bodily exercises. He had practised it assiduously for four years in America, and, in Paris, had defeated every one at the Salle Clermontel except M. Clermontel himself, who was enchanted by the young American's skill, and wanted him to enter the big annual assaults and meet the best fencers.

I wasn't in his class at all with the foils, and even the Bart., who was much better than I, came off so badly that Henry was never put on his true mettle to defeat him.

The black-bearded Laplace came in one day while the Bart. and I were whacking each other about the head, and, after watching for a little while, asked me if I knew anything about French boxing—"la savate." I said, with proper Anglo-Saxon scorn, that I didn't, and didn't want to, that

in our country it was only street boys who bit and scratched and kicked when they were settling their differences of opinion—gentlemen didn't think it sportsmanlike. Laplace very pertinently replied that French gentlemen didn't think it very sportsmanlike to beat each other with their fists—they left that for rowdies—but that, as a game, la savate was not to be despised; and, after all, what good reason was there for assaulting a man with two of your limbs only when le bon Dieu had given you four? As a theory that sounded rather unanswerable, and I had to confess myself outargued at the beginning, reserving nevertheless the unspoken judgment of my race that kicking wasn't fair.

("Eppur si muove," as Galileo said.)

I owned up that I'd never seen a bout at la savate, so Laplace and the Bart. (who had learned it in his student days) took off their shoes so that they shouldn't hurt each other, and gave an excellent exhibition of the fine points of this little-understood (abroad) system of combat—feinting and striking out with arm or foot, advancing, retreating, spinning round on one toe and the fingers of their two hands while the other foot shot back with unerring skill at head or throat or body, warding off the dangerous kick, or catching the leg that dealt it, and having to let go again in self-defence.

I was at first puzzled, then interested, then full of enthusiasm, and owned that my prejudice against a sport of which I knew nothing at all had been as ignorant and as silly as most other prejudices are. I agreed that la savate was much superior in agility and grace and complexity and effectiveness to ordinary boxing, both as a sport and as a means of attack or defence against footpads. And that is my opinion still and always will be. Those who sneer at

it don't know what they're talking about, and usually have never seen it at all. But they are loud in praise of jiu-jitsu, which is systematized foul play, if ever there was foul play in the world.

After all, as the genial Laplace remarked, le bon Dieu has given us four limbs. Why establish a convention that only two of them shall be used to fight with?

Our evenings we spent in a hundred pleasant ways, and seldom knew which one of the hundred it was to be until the question had been quarrelled over at dinner (which we had at any one of a hundred pleasant places), and finally decided by a sweeping majority—or perhaps by an obstreperous minority that wouldn't be downed. Sometimes we went to the Opéra (to Henry's delight) or to the Opéra Comique or to one of the theatres (which he didn't so much care for)—the Français or the Odéon or the Porte St. Martin, or even, if we were frivolously inclined, the Gaîté Montparnasse. And very often indeed, after dining somewhere in the Boulevard St. Michel, we would go on to the little salle of the "Concerts Rouge" in the Rue de Tournon, and sit there in a vile atmosphere of tobacco smoke that hadn't been cleared, only added to, for years; and added to it ourselves, and drank a mazagran of coffee, or a demi-litre of bière de Munich, or a grog Américain, and listened to classical or demi-classical or operatic music played better than anywhere else in Paris, under the direction of the black-bearded M. Touche, who conducted his musicians (first-prize conservatoire men, most of them) and played the 'cello at the same time. And when an encore was demanded, M. Touche would, now and then, play it himself—a 'cello solo—the "Révérie" of Schumann, or a beautiful little arrangement of an old Christmas carol by Mme. Augusta Holmés (which I adored but don't re-

member the name of). And his tone was so rich and pure and resonant and sonorous and velvety and caressing that you shut your eyes and held your breath and all but died of the sheer ecstatic delight of lovely sound.

Sometimes also we put on beautiful clothes and tied our white ties nicely, and dined out, across the river, in quite good houses (friends of the Bart.'s chiefly), but this didn't occur very often—a mere glimpse now and then into the world of respectability so that we shouldn't forget what forks to use. We were much more apt to be found at a comfortable café—Lavenue's in the Place de Rennes, or the Dôme, or the Panthéon, or the Taverne Lorraine, or the Deux Magots, sitting together in a corner against the wall, arguing and expounding the law in important matters of art, or French politics, or history, or morals, or beauty (what it was and what it wasn't), or food and where it was best to be obtained—pressing questions, all of them, that had to be threshed out thoroughly, no matter whose feelings were hurt, and decided, for good and all, on that very evening lest the march of human progress stand still.

Olympian nights! I shall never forget them. Their memory brings me a thrill of pleasure even now—perhaps some gentle laughter as well. I can see the Bart.'s earnest face, and his little jerking movements as he wriggles farther and farther forward in his seat and leans across the marble-topped table and shakes his fist in the air—or brings it down with a bang (when somebody's glass is sure to get overturned). I can see Henry sitting rather listlessly by, for he didn't take a very warm part in these discussions. I can see Fordyce, the unsuspected literary man, with his quizzical eye, and his impish delight when he had thrown, from a safe distance, some bomb-shell into the camp, and the Bart. and

I were hotly squabbling over it. I can see the long-haired Jellaby, the æsthete, who often made one of us, and always wanted to talk about Beauty. I can see McNaughten, the mad Scot, and Ames, the Australian painter (who afterward became so famous). But I can't see myself—one never can—and I'm sorry, for I was the Bart.'s most strenuous opponent in most of these debates, and we were very comic together—at least Fordyce used to say so. I've had the honor to appear in more than one of his stories, and always as a man of war.

I seem to remember that Henry wasn't always present at these gatherings (which he called dog-fights), and I know he seldom went with us to the Concerts Rouge or even to the theatre. He had got into the way of dropping in at the Avénue de l'Observatoire of an evening, where Naïla would sing to him and put him into a half-hypnotized state of quivering physical and spiritual joy, a blissful condition of enchantment, a sort of white magic in which he saw and felt and heard nameless unearthly things, and rode upon the stars, and saw, more clearly than at any other time, the face of his mysterious lady—the perfect mate that couldn't be found—and felt very near to her, so near that her voice almost, but not quite, reached his ears as it had used to do far back in childhood when they played together.

Marian would be there as well, of course, and sometimes the little Hungarian pianist, or the flat German girl, or both. How Marian liked these frequent visits I don't know, for she was, at most times, the least communicative soul that has ever come my way. But I myself was very glad to have Henry go there, both for his sake and for Naïla's—that is, after I had looked on for a time and had seen that he gave my cousin more pleasure than pain. At first, knowing her

feeling toward him, I was afraid it would be hard for her, but I soon saw that it wasn't. She hadn't ever had the slightest hope of his caring in the way she cared, and she seemed quite contented and happy with his friendship.

It was touching and delightful to see the intimacy that grew up between them—a sort of big-brother-and-little-sister intimacy—the sweetness and affection with which Naïla looked up to Henry, and his tender, thoughtful care of her. They had a great deal in common, and were surprisingly sympathetic about almost everything. The Bart. and I often spoke of it and of how fortunate it was that they should have met—what a lucky dog Henry was to have found so lovely a little sister who wouldn't bother him, as another woman might have done, with sentimentality, but would be like a real sister to him and listen to his troubles, and advise him and scold him and soothe him with beautiful music, and minister to a side of him that was too fine and too fragile for us to meddle with.

For Henry was, in certain ways, more delicate stuff than we, and we knew it. He had, woven in upon his masculine warp, a woof of fragile and sensitive and spiritual threads that made him quite different from most people, but these qualities weren't on the outside, and you might know him for a long time without ever suspecting them. He was as far from being priggish or prudish or womanish as any one I ever knew, and had rather a bluff manner before strangers or mere acquaintances, and swore like a sea-captain when things went wrong.

I was especially glad of his growing intimacy with Naïla and his frequent visits to the Avénue de l'Observatoire at just this time, for I knew that he had been seeing more or less of the Russian lady with the yellow hair, who lived in

the Square de la Tour Maubourg, and I didn't think she was good for Henry. I asked him once what he liked in her, and he said she was "sympathetic."

She'd been flattering him, of course, for the sake of his beaux yeux, as many another woman would have done if she'd had half a chance. But when he began going so much to my cousin's his visits to the Square de la Tour Maubourg seemed to cease, and I breathed a pious prayer that they had ceased forever.

Too much "sympathy" is like too much sugar—bad for the young.

XIII

IN December I had a letter from Lady Crail, renewing an old invitation to spend Christmas and the two weeks immediately surrounding it, at Shotland, their place in Oxfordshire. Henry and the Bart. were asked, as well, but declined at once without even considering it, for they didn't want to be interrupted in their work, and said, besides, what would Naïla and Marian do without them at that festal season? They meant to go in a party on Christmas Eve to the Messe de Minuit at one of the big churches, where the music is especially fine, and afterward celebrate the Réveillon at a restaurant (and devour bouillabaisse), and on the evening of Christmas Day have a soirée in the studio.

I hesitated for a long time, though I shouldn't have done so for an instant if her ladyship's letter hadn't been very warmly pressing, and if Mary hadn't added in a scrawl at the bottom, "You *must* come, Bill dear! We want you very, very much." I knew I oughtn't to go—that it would be but a miserable pleasure at best, an opening of old wounds, a trying and torturing sight of blessings that were never to be mine. I knew well enough that it were the better part of valor to stop where I was, in Paris, and have a pleasant Christmas in my own pleasant circle; but I found that I was a spineless weakling, a worm, an oyster, when it came to resisting that call in Mary's own words.

C'était plus fort que moi.

So I crossed the turbulent channel—a species of Rubicon—on the nineteenth, and had a day in London, and went down to Oxfordshire the morning after.

Mary herself, wrapped round in furs, for there was a nip in the air that threatened snow, met me at the station with a dog-cart and drove me the two miles to Shotland. She looked more like Diana than ever—plus Helen of Troy, plus Circe, plus Calypso, plus all the other lovely sirens whose names I can't think of just now, and was as rosy as the dawn, and as merry as the devil on Easter Monday. She asked me, confound her! if I found her looking well. I told her nobody could possibly be as beautiful as she looked, and she seemed quite pleased, and expressed the wish that I would give some of the other men in the house lessons in how to talk to a lady.

It was a beautiful drive through the keen, crisp air, over swelling hills and between hedgerows and, once or twice, across stretches of neighbors' land, where gates were opened for us by little fair-haired girls who bobbed courtesies. Mary told me, on the way, who the other people in the house were to be—a list of a dozen or so, which I spare you because they have no proper place in this chronicle. Several of them were names well known to me, though I had never met their owners, but over one of them I drew a sigh, and my heart sank, though I might well enough have expected the man to be there.

Lord Crail was as usual (and, I fancy, to everybody's relief) Christmasing in the south of France, and so I didn't meet him, but her ladyship was waiting in the house to greet me on my arrival and, as had become her habit, kissed me on both cheeks, to the great amusement and delight of several of her guests who stood near by. One of them, a

young man in gaiters, with a pleasant, ugly face and a merry eye, grinned at me in the most friendly, quizzical manner, and protested against this favoritism.

"None of *us* got kissed, you know!" he complained. "Hang it, it ain't fair! D'you have to come from Paris? Because if you do, I'm off on the night train and back again to-morrow with my arms open."

We were introduced and, as you have already guessed, the pleasant young man was my lucky rival, the future duke. He was a great blow to me, for, try as I might, I couldn't hate him. Nobody could. I took to him immediately, and he, I believe, to me, and we became great friends, and sat up late of nights together, discussing the world. So another prop still, almost the last one, came out from under the flimsy fabric of my imagined pretensions to Mary Borrow's hand, and I was left shaking my head among the ruins. It was inconceivable that any poor student of an overcrowded art could have the palest ghost of a chance against this winning and clever and preposterously favored youth who would before long be a duke, and one of the greatest landlords in England, quite possibly one of the greatest powers as well. It wasn't a case of hare and tortoise, it was a case of tortoise and railway train. (And, though hares may sleep, railway trains don't.)

If only Fellowes had been old or hunchbacked or ill-tempered or even ill-mannered or wicked or vainglorious! If only there might have been something about him to hate and despise!

It was hard luck. It depressed me, and made me envious of those fortunate people who only have to be born to blessings instead of working for them. It made me, for the first time, look ahead with something like despair at the long and

rugged road. It even made me, for a little while, despise my chosen craft, though I soon waked from this madness and was as heartily ashamed as I ought to have been.

This was my first experience in a big English country-house (but not my last, by any means, thank Heaven!) and I found the easy, independent life altogether delightful. The bridge plague hadn't yet, at that day, begun to harry and devastate the land, and so there was a variety of mild amusements to choose from, chief among them, of course, hunting. The local hunt met three times a week on the property of the Crails' neighbor, Sir Squire Fowley, who was M.F.H. In this noble sport Mary Borrow was the pride of that corner of Oxfordshire, but she wasn't allowed in the field just then, for she had had a nasty toss a few weeks before, and had actually cracked a rib, which didn't bother her at all. (She'd have been in the saddle for the very next meet but for her mother.)

Lady Crail offered me the pick of the stables if I cared to go out with the others, and, on one occasion, I took up the challenge, throwing myself upon the mercy of the head groom in the matter of a mount, for I had never hunted before in my life. The man chose for me a huge roan mare, well up to my weight, and who, he said, was a wise old hunter quite capable of picking her own line, and judging her own jumps, and making her own pace. The head groom advised me to leave everything to the mare, and I did, and that excellent lady treated me like a mother or a doting maiden aunt, and brought me through the day without death or disaster or even disgrace, which was something for her to brag of, as I rode, at that time, pretty badly, and indeed even now am no centaur.

I remember, with a wholly vicarious pride, that we were

among the three or four in at the death, after a fast, clean run—though luckily over easy country. But I didn't tempt Providence by trying it again. I stayed indoors and painted a portrait of Mary—a hastily done and very sketchy affair (half length only), but not bad, on the whole. It had life, I think, and was much admired by everybody in the house—good, kindly souls that they were! Archie Fellowes was especially enthusiastic over it, and shook his head and sighed and said he'd give both his legs to be able to *do* something like that—put something into the world that hadn't been there before—contribute his mite to the sum of things. He described himself as a genial, useless rotter, and said he should never be anything else because he had neither talent nor driving power.

"They talk about a 'future' for me," he said. "Politics—movements—influence in public affairs! All rot. I haven't got it in me. You wait and see!" And he was very much cast down, and said he wished poor Belford had a wife and six healthy sons, because he himself was going to be a ghastly failure of a duke, and dreaded the job horribly.

I thought I could mention a compensation or two, but didn't, for Fellowes and I never spoke of Lady Mary when we could avoid it. I hadn't the heart and he was too shy. It was plain to see that he was smitten to the core, and took it very boyishly and miserably and proudly, and turned red when Mary came into a room where he was, and lost the use of his tongue (almost the use of his arms and legs, as well). Few women could have resisted that humble, awkward, faithful devotion, and fewer still would have wanted to.

But alas, and alack! it was precious hard on a certain poor young painter-man who mightn't even show *his* devotion,

though it had been as deep as the sea, and as faithful as the tides to the call of the moon, and as changeless as the everlasting hills.

"From him that hath not . . ."

We had a delightful old-fashioned Christmas, waits and carols and a tree and mistletoe and all. Under that druidic symbol I kissed two pretty, fair-haired, not-very-unwilling damsels, also one stout Marchioness who was very unwilling indeed but whose lord wasn't, and laughed till he got purple in the face. Many a longing eye was cast upon Mary Borrow, who didn't precisely avoid the danger-mark, but I think all we other men rather stood aside for the duke-to-be, and he hadn't the courage. So Mary went unkissed (and was quite cross about it).

There was a ball, to which a number of neighbors' parties came, and dancing below stairs, too. A number of us went down, and I waltzed with a quite delightfully pretty maid, who put on no end of airs and said our steps suited perfectly, and she should never forget that waltz. Mary—dancing near by with a tall, embarrassed young footman who continually begged her pardon, your ladyship—overheard, and it was a long time before I was allowed to forget, either.

Also we had some hastily-got-up theatricals, in which lines were forgotten wholesale, and false mustaches came off at pathetic moments, and a table-cover was accidentally set on fire, and an appreciative audience laughed so hard that it all but had to be carried into the open air to recover.

So this pleasant fortnight (a mixed joy and agony to me) ran its too-swift course and came to an end. I had, first and last, several long talks with my hostess, which I haven't set down here, and once nerved myself up to asking her how

Fellowes's suit progressed. She thought well (and I thought so, too, for it was quite plain that Mary liked the man), but she could wish him a little more venturesome, a little less afraid to put his fortunes to the test. I wagged a sympathetic head at that, and said I didn't blame him. He stood to gain or lose so much! No wonder he was afraid. I should have been, I well knew. And her ladyship sighed and patted my hand and said she wished the world were differently ordered.

"We don't all get what we deserve ici bas, dear Willie. I wish we did—*all* of us." And then she talked to me very sweetly and lovingly of how nice it had been to have me there for those two weeks, and how she wished I might be there always.

"There'll never, never be another who can take your place in my heart, my dear. No matter *what* may have to happen. Always remember that!"

I have always remembered it, for I think it was as true as anything that ever got into words. And I tried to tell her all over again how well I understood her feeling about Mary's career, and how I agreed with it, and tried to hope that everything would be as she wished.

But I didn't have any long talks with Mary. I hadn't the courage, even if an opportunity had ever offered itself—and it never did. No more did she drive me to the village station when I left, and I was rather glad, for I found I hadn't even courage enough for that. Half a dozen of us left by the same train and travelled up to town together. It was better so. Archie Fellowes had asked me down to Gloucestershire for a week's hunting, but I refused, and stayed only a day in London, and took the late train that same night for Paris.

"And I wish I'd stayed there, where I belong!" I said to myself. "I wish I'd never come!"

That wasn't true, and I knew it. It was a sort of cri du cœur that had got itself hurt and found itself left with an ache in consequence. But it would gladly have courted the hurt again at the same price.

That's a way hearts have.

XIV

I FOUND myself extraordinarily glad to be back again in the Rue d'Assas. I felt as if I had been away for months, and as if I never wanted to go away again. The bare, black, dripping garden looked charming to me—a familiar, enchanted forest, and I was quite sure that the white-walled studio was the biggest and pleasantest and most beautiful interior in all the world—fit enclosure to produce immortal masterpieces in. In short, the place was "home," for which, I am sure, Gilead (wherever that spot may lie) is but another name—a synonyme. Anyhow, its balm spread soothingly over a much-lacerated heart and a bruised spirit, so that in a little while they no longer ached at all (if you didn't take them out and turn them over and examine them to make sure).

It was, perhaps, something of a blow to find that I hadn't been very greatly missed by Henry and the Bart. and the Castles (and very bad taste on their part to show it), but I was so serene in my new comfort that I forgave them even that dire insult.

They'd had, it appeared, a very good time indeed—so good that they were still talking about it and didn't seem particularly interested in what had happened at Shotland. I must except Naïla, though, who got me in a corner and demanded the whole story, and turned her hidden eyes up to my face when I told about Archie Fellowes, and held my

hand without saying anything (which is just what I should have liked her to do), and was altogether most sympathetic and satisfactory.

Henry and the Bart. hadn't let their play interfere too much with their work. The "Chagrin de Vie" was well along toward completion, and Henry had made a quite masterly new little copy of one of Ribera's horrors in the Louvre.

He was worried about something, though. I, who knew all his moods and exactly how he looked in each one, could see that, and wondered what it was about. I didn't try to pump him, but I made an opportunity for quiet talk, and, after some beating about the bush, he came out with it. He was more than worried—he was frightened. It seems he had made, during my absence, a real attempt at a portrait of his mysterious lady—his obsession. (I never know what to call her, and so let us begin now to use the name we all called her by afterward, the name attached to those five great canvases—"L'Introuvable.")

It was the first time. He had been putting it off until he thought himself sure enough of hand and of his medium, so that he shouldn't insult her by an ill-constructed caricature.

He found himself in a terrible but not at all unnatural difficulty—one he oddly enough had never anticipated. If you can draw, try one day to draw, *from memory*, the face of somebody very familiar to you, but of whom you have never made a portrait from the life. Unless you have peculiar and very unusual powers, you will find you can't do it at all. And that was what Henry found. Not the face of a child to its mother, a wife to her husband, is more familiar than to Henry the haunting face of the woman he could not find. It was before him night and day. It was as objectively real

to him as my face or the Bart.'s. But when he tried to draw it, it became, all at once, elusive and airy and dim, and retreated away and looked at him across infinite distances, with an anguished expression in its great eyes, as if it would stay if only it might—as if it were trying its best to help him, but couldn't. And then it would be gone altogether for quite a minute or even more.

Poor Henry was in despair. It seemed to him as if God himself and the devil and all the powers of darkness were arrayed against him. He didn't know where to turn. He had worried himself almost ill, and hadn't been sleeping at night, and was in a quite dreadful state of mind (of body, too —as jumpy as a cat). I tried to cheer him up, but I'm afraid it was a poor attempt, for the case looked pretty gloomy to me. It was a very real obstacle he'd come to. I knew well enough, from my own experience, how difficult it is to draw from a mental image however distinct the image may seem to be. I'd often tried, for example, to make a portrait of my dear mother from memory. I could call up her image before my mind's eye, and it was almost as clear and strong as if she stood there in the flesh, but I couldn't draw it or paint it successfully. The truth is that the things about a human face that make what we call its expression are very little, subtle things that have to be studied with microscopic care and reproduced with microscopic exactness. A mental projection isn't clear enough for that.

It struck me as very strange and quite unpardonable that I should never have foreseen this difficulty. Henry couldn't have been expected to, but I should have known it would occur, and I called myself hard names and was as depressed as Henry was. But I tried not to let him see my discouragement, and advised him to devote as much of his time as he

could to drawing or painting portraits of people from memory and then correcting them from the life. It seemed to be the only helpful thing I could think of.

While we were on the subject I asked him just how distinct and vivid the vision of that unknown girl's face was to him. It seemed to be hard to explain, but I helped by telling him to call up the image of the Bart., and to look from one to the other. They seemed to be about equally strong as pictures, and, oddly enough, that gave me the best idea I had ever had of how Henry's obsession appeared to him. It was just the ordinary, commonplace mental image one has of an intimate companion, only it was more constantly before him and didn't have to be called up by an effort of will. Also, I gathered, it was much more distinct and lifelike when he was in certain moods, and, most of all, when Naïla Castle sang to him and he was carried up and away on waves of beautiful sound.

I think I had always before imagined this vision to be a sort of spooky, semi-real presence that got between Henry and the people about him and did uncomfortable, uncanny things, and all but clanked its chains like a proper ghost. But from this moment it lost its terrors for me. I even began to wonder a little that Henry should take it so seriously, but then I tried to imagine myself perpetually haunted by the vision of the beautiful face of a girl I had never seen—a girl who had grown up with me in another, inner world, from earliest childhood—a girl I mysteriously recognized as the Perfect Mate, the lovely key to heaven, the sum of all ecstatic and indescribable delights. . . .

Then I didn't wonder any more. I think, if I had been Henry, I should have gone quite mad with love and longing and hope deferred and fear and despair.

The very idea, imaginatively indulged in, excited me almost beyond bearing, and I began to regard Henry with a new wonder—something like awe.

We talked for rather a long time about the haunting, unfindable lady, and philosophized about her, and wondered if any other man before Henry's time had ever been obsessed in just this strange fashion. Henry was, as always, quite willing, even anxious, to discuss the thing as a phenomenon—a "case"—though he had long since given up trying to explain it on scientific grounds. He didn't even want to. I rather think that if some eminent gentleman had been able to prove to him that all that made him different from other men was a tiny little lesion somewhere on the surface of his brain—a wee blood-clot no bigger than the head of a pin—that the whole thing was a physical malady, a mere matter of abnormal pressure and deranged nerve messages and chemistry and optics—that there really wasn't any beautiful lady at all, couldn't be, in fact, . . . I think Henry would have cut his throat.

I know as we talked about it, on that winter afternoon in the studio, and I ventured the faintest, most shadowy attempt at a hint that it all might be some such physical matter as I have written above, he got very much excited, and almost angry, and begged me never to say such things again, for, without shaking the perfect confidence that kept him alive and hoping, they made him miserable. And he had enough to bear, without that. So I begged his pardon, and didn't offend again on that score.

But I did try to find out—as I had tried once before in New Haven—how much there was in this inner life of his beyond the mere vision of a face and his belief that it was the face of a living woman. I had in mind, of course, the

fairy stories of his childhood—that miraculous other world that he had once lived in and had found so difficult to describe.

He told me he had almost lost it altogether, though a vague, baffling sense of it remained with him like ill-remembered dreams of something too heavenly to be put into words, even if one could. But now and then he had a glimpse into it, at odd hours when he wasn't expecting such a happiness at all, and it was dear and familiar and restful and sweet—a land of all delights. (But it couldn't be told about. It was "too different," Henry said.) And sometimes, when Naïla sang to him and the lights were low, this mysterious world of his (mysterious forever, alas! to the rest of us) seemed to draw very near, though distance didn't exist there, nor ocular vision, nor, I gathered, any of the ordinary clumsy senses of men, so near that it lay just beyond the reach of his straining spirit, and, before the gate of it, his beautiful lady stood and smiled and beckoned him with her gray eyes and held out her arms.

There was nothing about it that could be put into words, because it wasn't like anything within the range of human experience. It wanted another language, and not even Henry knew that—or, if he knew it, he couldn't speak it with a human tongue.

So, as you see, I learned little more than I had known before—nothing at all, as practical knowledge goes. Once or twice I had had, or so it seemed to me, while Henry was groping and groping for words with which to tell the untellable, just the faintest glimpse or echo or hint or fragrance of unspeakable, unguessable things. Once or twice it seemed to me that out of the great void a wing-tip had brushed near by. But if I felt anything of that sort the

quality of it fled with the moment, and I was left empty-handed.

I tried to talk about it all to the Bart., who came up-stairs later on (Henry had gone out somewhere), but did very badly, and doubtless sounded rather ridiculous. The Bart. was inclined to sum the whole matter up and see a sort of allegory in Henry (on the banks of the *Seine* this time!)—man's soul reaching out toward infinite beauty or infinite joy, or something of the kind. I asked where the lady came in, and he said there was always a lady in allegories; in fact, if there weren't any ladies there would be no allegories.

Then we fell to talking, rather gloomily, about Henry, and to wondering how long he would be able to bear this life of hope deferred. The Bart. believed he couldn't bear it very long—that nobody could—especially if he managed to paint the portrait, as he was hoping to do, and showed it, and then, as was very likely, nothing came of all his study and toil.

If only Henry could be persuaded to give it up! he said, and fall in love with somebody—Naïla, for example, who adored him and was so good to him, and whom he liked so well—and marry her and settle down like an ordinary human being, and have a lot of children about the place.... The Bart. opined there wouldn't be any mysterious visions of beautiful spooks after a few years of *that*.

"I wish to Heaven he *would* marry Naïla!" said I, sadly. "But it's too impossible even to hope for. It's quite out of the question, and luckily the child knows it."

At that the Bart. quite suddenly flushed red and took his head between his hands and gave a sort of groan.

"By Jove, Bill, it isn't fair!" he cried out. "Damn him,

it isn't fair! He's just using her, . . . just making use of her for his own comfort, . . . taking advantage of what she gives him without giving anything back. . . . She coddles him and comforts him and sings to him and makes him believe the sun rises and sets for his own particular damned pleasure, and—and what does *he* do, I ask you? He doesn't care a tinker's curse for poor Naïla except for what he gets out of her. He'd drop her like an old coat if somebody else came along that could coddle him more to his taste. . . . It makes me sick to see it. I tell you, old Bill, it makes me sick! There's times when I think I could murder the fellow for a grasping, cadging, self-centred dog-in-the-manger of an octopus of a juggernaut. That child is wearing her heart out for him, and he doesn't even trouble to see it. It doesn't occur to *him* that Naïla's side of the thing is worth considering. I should like to take him by the neck and *make* him consider it!"

I sat in my place gasping like a fish on the carpet. This from the good, old, sweet-tempered Bart., who loved Henry like a twin brother, and would have made almost any conceivable sacrifice for him, and never was known to say a harsh word of anybody. I couldn't believe my ears, and thought I must have dreamed it.

Besides, it was my own especial privilege to abuse Henry, and I considered that no one else had a right to. I was all for falling upon the slanderer and making him take it back. But I stole another look at the Bart.'s flushed, miserable face, that looked bitterer than I had ever before seen it, and I couldn't be angry with him.

If I hadn't been as blind as an owl at noonday I might have seen long since how matters were. I had often enough watched him with Naïla, and been pleased and touched at

his gentle, tender, kindly way; but it never had occurred to me that, despite the sad facts of his life, which made him a sort of paroled prisoner, he might still be human and capable of human emotions as well as human kindness.

The poor old Bart! What a sad and hopeless complication of a matter already complicated enough, Heaven knew!

No, I couldn't be angry with him, only sorry and hurt for his hurt and his sorrow. I pointed out, as gently as I might, that he was a little unjust to Henry, who hadn't the least shadow of an idea that Naïla's feeling was anything but friendship, and that, far from not giving her anything in return, he was giving her, every day of their lives, just what she wanted more than anything else, save one thing, in all the world—his affectionate friendship and interest and sympathy. I told the Bart. (breaking a confidence that I thought the circumstance warranted) how I had surprised my cousin's secret, some months since, and what she had said.

"So you see," I told him, "Naïla knows exactly where she stands, and chooses to stand there, and is happier on account of it than she has ever been before in her life." I talked to him for a long while in this strain, and pointed out that, after all, Naïla was no helpless child whose affections were being trifled with, but a grown-up young woman, nearly as old as Henry himself, who knew quite well what she was about, and wouldn't thank us for interfering.

The Bart. had to confess that I was right, and begged my pardon and Henry's, and called himself names for blackguarding Henry, and said he took it all back. But he was still very much demoralized and quite unlike himself, and I didn't dare leave him alone to get blue and melancholy and ill. I said we'd go across the river somewhere for dinner,

just the two of us, for Henry hadn't yet appeared, and the Bart. was quite pathetically pleased and grateful.

So we went out to the corner of the Gardens, by the foot of the Rue Vavin, and got into a fiacre and had ourselves driven across the river to the Palais Royale. We went to the Petit Véfour in the far corner of the arcade, and ordered a quite lordly repast, with caviare and a bisque of écrevisses, and a sôle normande, and a succulent filet mignon with sauce béarnaise and peas and pommes soufflées, and after that a little round, jolly, smiling duck (but that it lacked a head to smile with), and a salad of chicory, with an onion in it, and, by way of sweet, a little round ring of a savarin, each, dripping with rhum de la Jamaïque and with a dab of whipped cream inside the ring.

And we had two kinds of wine—a Château Lafitte and a mellow old yellowish, sweet, heavy, fiery Spanish "Pajarete," for which the establishment was at that time famous, and which had been so long in bottle ('57) that the cork was black and crumbling, and the cobwebs and dirt perfectly genuine. It was a wine of which a single glassful ought to be drunk, late in the meal; but the Bart. and I finished the bottle between us, and had the most surprising and original and weighty opinions upon almost everything in the world, which we burned to express, and did express very eloquently and at great length, till we found that everybody else had gone home and we were quite alone in the restaurant save for a row of sleepy waiters.

I don't remember what we did after that, but I have a vague recollection of walking long distances through the streets, and I know that an exceedingly late hour found us arm-in-arm on the Pont des Arts reciting poetry to the river Seine. Then I think we went home.

The Bart. had a headache the next morning. I hadn't, and was intolerably proud about it. But if I should drink a half bottle of Pajarete '57 with my dinner to-night my obituary would be in all the morning newspapers, and this veracious chronicle would never be finished.

A dreadful thought!

So Henry set himself doggedly to making portrait sketches from memory, and found it the most difficult thing he had ever attempted, but wouldn't give up, and plodded on with a patient courage that was magnificent to see. And late in January I began serious work on the picture I meant to send to the Salon.

I was still enchanted by the fascinating problem of a lot of different kinds of white brought into relation, and wished to do a white picture. I engaged the pretty red-haired model (Berthe la Rousse she was called in the Quarter), who had posed at Julian's during our first week there, and, for the present, gave up my school work altogether. Also, I told M. Constant what I meant to attempt, and he approved highly, and promised to come and give me special criticism every now and then.

The picture I had in mind was a young girl sitting up in bed, but still flushed with sleep, in a white room, and a single ray of early sunlight slanting in across the white bed. The only color was to be the pearl-shell pink of the girl's flesh, and her rope of red hair, and the pale gold of the sunbeam; everything else white—all the kinds of white upon white upon white that there are, and there are thousands.

The sun came slanting into my own bedroom about ten o'clock each morning and remained for an hour or more,

so I posed Berthe la Rousse there each day, and worked as long as the sun lasted. I made innumerable studies of the size the picture was to be, for I didn't want a niggled, labored, over-elaborated canvas. I wanted to paint the final picture in four or five sittings—no more. So I made studies and studies, one after another, until I could draw the thing with my eyes shut, and knew the subtle value of every inch of those lovely folds and planes and hollows of shining white.

M. Constant came as he had promised, about once a week, and nodded his head and told me I was doing well—a veritable find in subject, and no "croute" in execution. He was delighted with our studio, which he said was very original (though much too fine for a pair of rapins to work in), and spent an enraptured hour in a chair or down on his knees, poring over my Hispano-Moresque carpet, of which he had never seen the equal. He asked permission to borrow it some day and paint it into a picture, but that never occurred, and now, alas! never can occur, for he is no more. In his death there passed out of the world a great painter (though not one of the greatest), and a great teacher as well (though he had small store of patience and gave of his talent only to those young men who truly interested him). He was good enough to think I showed promise, and was unfailingly kind and helpful to me. I owe him much.

But while I write these few words about the good M. Constant, there comes before my eye a little, rotund, gray-haired, gray-bearded figure flourishing the end of an ill-odored cigar between its fingers. I see the gleam of a watery eye and hear a husky voice that always seemed to be having a cold, and I feel the pudgy fingers of the other hand clapped upon my shoulder.

It is that simplest and kindliest of all modest, hard-working gentlemen, William Bouguereau. I painted under his guidance only a few brief weeks, and knew him scarcely at all afterward, but he is as unforgettable to me as Henry or the Bart.—as my uncle George himself. For he made you love him, whether you would or no.

It had become the fashion, even in the days of which I write, to poke fun at M. Bouguereau's school of art—to call his rosy nymphs and his new-washed cupids and his sweetly sorrowful Madonnas "boite de baptême" paintings —to accuse him of insincerity and commercialism. I am afraid the "boite de baptême" verdict will never be reversed, but the two other charges were as cruel and as false as ever charges were in this world. There was never a sentimentalist who worked harder or more sincerely or with a purer heart and soul. If his mind delighted in rosy inanities it was a perfectly honest limitation. He thought the nymphs and cupids worth while, and toiled upon them indefatigably—put into them the same chaste and child-like nobility that made his private life a wonder—well-nigh a miracle—in this cynical, irreverent age of ours.

I can see the little gray, round figure come trotting into that big, lower room at Julian's, holding the cigar end, the classical "megot" which was always going out and having to be relighted and then going out again (I never knew any one who had seen him with a whole cigar). I can feel his weak and rather trembly grip about my shoulders, and hear again the husky, slow voice.

"A—h! Mais c'est pas mal, vous savez, mon cher. C'est pas mal, ça. Seulement. . . ." And then he would pick out some little single fault in my "academy," quite ignoring the others, however glaring they might be, and

criticise it and gesture over it with the cigar end, and redraw it beautifully himself, and pat me once more on the shoulder and go away.

He wasn't a good teacher, and I learned little in his class, but I remember him with affection and tenderness and regret. A serious and sincere artist, an honor to his craft, a noble and great-hearted gentleman.

God rest his honest soul!

I introduced Henry to the good M. Constant, who was very gracious and polite to him, and delighted with his romantic beauty. He couldn't get over the oddity of those deep-blue eyes in a dark-skinned face, and wanted to know how such a thing had come about; but that we couldn't tell him. He asked if he might see some of Henry's work, and, when Henry had pulled out his easel upon which was a half-finished memory portrait of the Bart., exclaimed over it, saying that it wasn't bad at all—not half bad—and very original. He sat down before the portrait and examined it with much care, asking a great many questions about how the painter had managed the unusual effect of vividness, and why, and just what he meant by it. Henry told him about his admiration for Ribera, which made M. Constant smile; but afterward he nodded his head with great decision and said he was glad to find that a rather neglected master had his uses after all. He said also that he wished he had Henry in his own class at Julian's, and shook hands with him, and we went away to look at my picture.

I must confess that this opinion of M. Constant's on Henry's work was a surprise to me. Perhaps I had been too close to Henry's labors for too long a period; anyhow, I hadn't believed them as good as all that. I told the Bart.,

and found that he too believed our friend, in spite of a hopelessly philistine outlook upon art in general, was exhibiting very unusual and original power. It made me feel rather blind and foolish and mean, and I was uncommonly nice to Henry for a long time—by way of making up for my lack of appreciation. Also I advised him to take advantage of M. Constant's expression and move up-stairs at Julian's, which, after some thought, he did, and M. Constant was much pleased and devoted a lot of time to him.

So the late winter drew swiftly by, and, almost before we knew it, spring, which opened early that year, was upon us, and the air became soft and suave, so that we had the studio windows open in the afternoon; and the lilacs in the garden began to bud, and Henry had Naïla's long cane chair dragged out of winter quarters and polished off.

XV

I FINISHED my white "salon picture" early in March, a long while before sending-in time, and then began to look about for something else to do. The something else turned up as apropos as if it had all been arranged beforehand. I had a letter from Lady Crail, saying that S——, the great portrait-painter, had been down at Shotland with them for a Friday-to-Monday, had there seen my hastily done sketch of Mary, and had given it unstinted praise, prophesying for me a very brilliant future. (You may figure my bosom swelling with pride as I read.) But the best was still to come. Staying in the house at the same time chanced to be the stout marchioness whom I had kissed under the mistletoe at Christmas. This august lady, it seemed, was desirous of having her portrait painted, but felt that she couldn't afford such prices as S—— or even the second flight of fashionable artists demanded, and so had said to Lady Crail that she had half a mind to look me up, on her forthcoming visit to Paris, and get me to paint her cheaply but well.

"But don't you do it too cheaply, dear Willie! The woman's as rich as a Jew, really, for all that she's rather mean. She can afford a very good figure indeed (any figure at all). So just you receive her in that grand studio of yours, and wear your grandest clothes, and make Henry T. wear his grandest, too, and tell her you're so busy you don't

see how you can possibly squeeze her in. S—— told us you were sure to be *the* portrait-painter in a few years, and Lady Harrold is very excited about it, and as keen as possible on being the first to be "done" by you. If it turns out well you might send the portrait to Burlington House for the spring show. S—— will see that it goes in without any trouble."

I laughed over this kindly and timely warning—which proved to be very timely indeed, for I hadn't had it two days before Lady Harrold, the stout marchioness, sent me a note from the Ritz to ask if I'd call.

You may well believe I called! We went through some quite amusing diplomacy (haggling made artistic), and Lady Harrold and a plain, shadowy sort of female cousin came to the studio for tea, and were obviously impressed by its splendors, as well as by the distinguished and aristocratic bearing of Mr. Henry Trent, and the grave but by no means grovelling courtesy of Sir Augustus Hayes, Bart. (whom they already knew slightly).

The result was that her ladyship gave me five sittings (standings they were, to be accurate), posed in a very lovely Callot evening frock, with pearls, against one of the tapestry panels at the end of the studio; and I painted a quite dashing portrait. Perhaps it wandered just a trifle from the photographic, on the side of flattery, but not at all absurdly so, for she really looked very nice in her pretty dress with its long, simple, clinging lines. Anyhow, she was enchanted with it, and so was the plain, shadowy cousin, and so was Henry, and so, with his tongue in his cheek, was the Bart. But when M. Constant saw it he first laughed and then read me a long and serious lecture on the perils and easy pitfalls of fashionable portrait-painting.

I was abashed and ashamed, and wanted to attack the canvas then and there with a palette-knife, but M. Constant wouldn't let me. He said it was really very good indeed—a striking piece of work—but that hereafter I must always bear in mind that I was a serious artist, with a conscience, and not a milliner or a beauty specialist.

So the marchioness departed in great satisfaction, leaving behind her a check for two hundred pounds (no, it was guineas!), but her portrait never stared proudly from the walls of Burlington House. I wouldn't send it there after M. Constant's lecture, I preferred to wait until I had something better to offer.

A few days later I had another line from Lady Crail to say that she and Mary were coming to Paris for a week to shop, and hoped I was in town. I spent a few hours in agonized wobblings, but at their end turned tail and ran away.

I couldn't face it.

I went straight to Dresden (the first city that came into my head), and from there wrote to say how sorry I was to miss them. Her ladyship wrote back again, very kindly expressing her regret, but Mary scrawled a single word on a sheet of paper and sent it to me:

"Coward!"

At first I was angry, and tore the sheet across and threw it on the floor. Then I rescued it, and smoothed it out and stuck it together again with postage-stamps on the back.

What did she mean by that? Oh, of course, that she knew I was running away. That was plain enough. But what else? Was it encouragement . . . more coquetry . . . a dare . . . or just nothing at all?

It might mean so many shades of so many things! I puzzled over it for hours together, and read the most absurd fantastic meanings into it, and jeered at them and at myself, and was on the point of dashing back to Paris to find out. But I didn't. Mary was right, I was a coward. I hadn't the courage to go through that Christmas-tide experience of mingled joy and misery again. Oh yes, I was a coward, right enough!

I remained in Dresden for two weeks and then went back to Paris, where I found that spring (at the time of my sudden flight just hesitating, and standing on tippy-toes, and trying to make up her mind) had come to town at last and banished overcoats and brought out flowery hats on the beautiful ladies, and dressed the trees along the street in green, and stuck millions of stiff white or pink, waxy chestnut cones among the leaves, and filled all the air with delicate delicious fragrance. I was enveloped in this sweet, balmy air all the way across the city from the gare de l'Est—a veritable bath of perfume—and sniffed it, and drank it in and thrilled with it, and longed to kiss somebody by way of showing how glad I was.

And in the garden in the Rue d'Assas what a walled paradise of lovely intoxicating odors! for the lilacs were in flower all about the place, and doors and windows stood wide open to welcome their sweet savor.

Naïla had taken up her old quarters in the chaise-longue, and was there every afternoon. To amuse herself she had borrowed the tall German girl's guitar, and was teaching herself to play it. Like all other musical instruments, it had for her no difficulties, so that, within a month, she was strumming it like a Gitana, and singing to herself under the tender green leaves. Mme. Salomon used to come part

way along the brick path to listen, and nod her head delightedly, and sit there instead of in the gateway where she belonged, cutting up vegetables in the big bowl. She adored Naïla, and was always bringing her funny little nice cakes, or pain d'épice, or dragées de baptême.

Henry, it seemed, had discovered hitherto unobserved beauties in Marian's sober face—notably the mouth, which was indeed lovely, when she didn't spoil it by pressing her lips too tight together (and that was most of the time). So he was making studies of her in oils, little careful sketches of her mouth, from various points of view, or her nose (which was good, too, but, *I* thought, lacked the charm of Naïla's, which turned up the very least bit at its end). I think he never made a complete portrait—just these fragmentary studies—but Marian posed for him with the utmost uncomplaining patience, and seemed glad and eager to do it. Perhaps it was no more than a natural gratification at having her looks taken notice of for the first time, but I began to think my hitherto cold and silent and self-contained cousin showed signs of coming to life under this novel attention from Henry. More than once I thought I saw a new and brooding light in her eye when it was turned upon him, and I spoke about it to Naïla, who was at first astonished and inclined to laugh, but afterward, I thought, watchful and none too well pleased. Perhaps I was wrong, but, anyhow, I became sorry that I'd spoken, and berated myself for a meddling idiot.

We began again to gather, toward five o'clock, for tea in the garden, my two cousins, Henry and I—and sometimes Fordyce, or the German girl, or the little Hungarian, or even all of us together. The Bart. came when he could, but he was spending a great deal of his time away at the

shop of the Italian stone-cutters, where the "Chagrin de Vie" was being turned into marble. He was tinting it slightly, as the fashion, led by old MM. Gérôme and Barrias, had begun to be, and was quite pleased with the result, and meant to send it, not to the Salon, but to London for the Royal Academy show at Burlington House.

The cards from the two Salons came in soon, and, for a week or so, there was April weather in the Quartier Latin —tears on one side, smiles and gayety on the other. I had got my white picture in without any trouble. (But I hadn't worried about that. M. Constant had it under his own especial wing.) McNaughten, the mad Scot, had got two landscapes in; Ames, the Australian, had been refused and was furious; Fordyce had been refused (a little picture of a ball-room), and didn't care tuppence; Meunier had got in, and, to every one's astonishment and delight, so had Laplace for the first time in his life. He was quite dazed by it, and so were MM. Bouguereau and Ferrier, and so was Papa Julian; so indeed was every one who knew him. The flat German girl had failed: I'm afraid the trees were too blue for even the New Salon (the Champ de Mars) to which she had applied. As for Henry, he had sent nothing, because he had no finished picture to send, and, besides, didn't care a straw about Salon exhibitions, or any other exhibitions, or pictures good or bad, or any such trivial things.

"Just you wait until next year!" said Henry, and shut his mouth tight, and the vertical vein stood out in his forehead, as was its way when he was very much in earnest about something.

However, he went with us on the day of vernissage to the Galérie des Machines, where the two Salon shows used to

be held before the Grand Palais was built, and looked at the extraordinary gathering of celebrities, both male and female, while the rest of us looked at the pictures. We found Meunier and Laplace there, though not together, for the little élégant was accompanied by two quite stupendous ladies (of the half-world, I fear), and had on the newest of new frock coats as well as the shiniest of all top hats; while Laplace was, as ever, en type du Boul' Miche, and arm-in-arm with my red-haired model, Berthe la Rousse (who insisted on standing for hours in front of the picture which represented her, in the vain hope of being recognized).

I was pleased to find that she and Laplace weren't alone there, for the canvas had been very well hung, "on the line," and seemed to be attracting quite its fair share of attention. Even Henry was pleased with it—a rare tribute! He said it was very jolly indeed, and was bitterly reproached by Naïla for his lukewarmness. She herself professed to be enchanted, but that was sheer affection and kindness of heart, for she couldn't possibly have got, through those smoked goggles of hers, even the roughest idea of that kind of a picture. She could have seen no more than the drawing and a vague blur of color. The subtle differences in the tones of white must have been entirely lost to her.

The Bart. and I had long cherished a plan for spending May in Spain. We waited until the Salon honor list was out (I got an "Honorable Mention!") and then went away at once. We had hoped to take Henry with us, but he wouldn't go, and so Fordyce joined us instead. This isn't (or at least shouldn't be—but I'm afraid it is, for all that) a record of my doings, except where those are bound up with Henry Trent's, and so I shall have nothing to say of

the delightful four weeks the Bart. and Jimmy Fordyce and I spent in the land of Cervantes and the Moors (not to mention La belle Otéro). It is enough to relate that we lounged and sketched and sunned ourselves and went to bull-fights in Granada and Sevilla; marvelled among the thousand columns of the Cordoba mosque; thought grim Toledo the most picturesque city in the world; stood entranced in wonder and despair before the Velasquezes in the Prado, and watched royalty go swimming at San Sebastian. It was a fruitful holiday with me, for I brought away nearly fifty little studies of everything from bulls to Gothic architecture, painted on small wooden panels—and these you may see for yourselves, if you wish to, all together upon the wall of a certain public gallery in one of our great cities. I went there to see them hung last year, and how they brought back to me those happy, early, golden days!

But I'm quite sure I could do them better now.

We arrived back in Paris at the end of May, and the Bart. left almost at once for London to look after business affairs and have a peep at his "Chagrin de Vie" in Burlington House, where it had created quite a sensation and set the critics to squabbling.

A masterpiece of romantic realism. . . . A painted bisque doll. . . . An insult to the serious art of sculpture . . . etc., etc.

But in the Rue d'Assas I found the world wagging as quietly on as if two indispensable members of the circle had only stepped round the corner for an hour or so. Marian and Naïla were there every afternoon, and sometimes in the morning as well; Henry was at work, but leisurely, as if the warm, summer air had the least bit relaxed even his iron industry; the flat German girl and the Hungarian pianist

(who had regular occupation now in a café orchestra every evening, and was consequently in funds) seemed to be regular visitors, and the black-bearded Laplace was often to be seen (and heard), for he had taken a great fancy to Naïla, and she to him—the oddest friendship imaginable.

I thought Henry rather silent and grave and preoccupied, though he greeted me on my return with all his usual quiet affection—and perhaps more. I spoke of it to Naïla when we were alone, and she thought she had noticed a change in him also. She told me about an odd occurrence, something that had happened a few weeks back, which had distressed her at the time and seemed to distress her all over again in the telling.

It seemed that the little Hungarian had brought in one afternoon a compatriot of his, a strange, wild being, even wilder than he was himself, who spoke very little French and less German, and was reputed to be half gypsy. The pianist said his friend had the "seeing eye," or some such abnormal power, and asked him to tell the fortunes of those present. So the man told the flat German girl a number of things in her mysterious past, and got them right, and some of her future as well—a not very cheery tale; also he dipped into the career of some one else who was there (I forget who it was) and then turned to Henry. Henry seemed to excite and frighten him, for he talked a long time to the pianist in their own tongue, and gesticulated, and stared at Henry, and shook his head, and didn't want to go on. They foolishly pressed him, and the man got more and more uneasy, and at last said in a whisper:

"C'est la mort! C'est la mort!" and wouldn't drink his tea, and presently made excuses and went away.

"Death!"

It gave me a cold shiver. And I was angry, too. I hate such silly hocus-pocus. I asked Naïla what Henry had said, and she began to tremble.

"He sat back in his chair—we were all about the tea-table here in the garden, you know—and turned his face up toward the sky, or toward the tree-tops, if you like, and, after a moment, he said, quite quietly:

"So that's what it all means?" Just as if he were asking somebody a question. I was furious, dear Bill, for that sort of sham fortune-telling, future-seeing rubbish always makes me nervous, and puts me in a temper, too. I hate it always, and I wished with all my heart that we hadn't let the wretched little man begin. I was frightened, too, and I said to Henry:

"'What what all means? What are you talking about?' I think I must have spoken quite sharply. Then he laughed and said he hadn't meant anything—certainly not what his words sounded like, for he thought fortune-telling was all nonsense, and didn't believe the Hungarian knew anything about his death or anybody's. But I believe he was depressed, for all that. So was I, for days after, and couldn't forget that horrid little man. I should have liked to push him off a bridge into the river—scaring people like that!"

My cousin made fists of her thin white hands and looked so fierce and revengeful that I had to laugh at her. But I didn't at all like what she'd told me. Henry wasn't the kind of man to whisper mysterious hints of death to. He was too nervous and imaginative and brooding. I wished the thing hadn't occurred.

I spoke to him of it later on that same evening, but in as light and casual a tone as I could muster up. Henry gave

me a quick look, but afterward laughed and shook his head, saying:

"Oh, I'm not so easy to frighten as all that, Bill. I dare say I shall die when the proper time comes, but it won't be because an unwashed little Hungarian told about it." He dropped his smile and scowled at me.

"I don't know—nor care much—whether I die next week or in sixty years from now, but I *do* know one thing—I sha'n't go until I've found what I'm looking for, and nobody can make me—not all the fortune-tellers in Christendom. So just you cheer up, old Bill!"

And I did.

The Bart. and I had talked of going to Switzerland later in the season, to climb, and had hoped this time to take Henry with us, even if we had to overpower him by physical force, but, on our arrival in Paris, we found that "the family" had plans ready made for all of us and wouldn't listen to our scheme. It appeared that during the previous summer Marian and Naïla had spent a month with two middle-aged English ladies who had a house in a little village called Grez-sur-Loing, not far from the forest of Fontainebleau, and had so fallen in love with the place that they had then and there engaged to return for the whole of the next warm season, on condition that they should be allowed to share the expense of the house (for the English ladies weren't too well off). Naïla had talked to Henry about the place, and described its charm to him so cunningly that he refused to listen to any other summer plans whatsoever.

So they all laid siege to the Bart. and me—finding, oddly enough, an unexpected ally in Jimmy Fordyce, who had once visited Grez, staying at the inn, which he said was very quaint and comfortable. The end of it was that, on the

Bart.'s return from London, we gave in, conditionally, and promised to come for a week at least, meaning to run away to Switzerland if we didn't like Grez.

We left town early in June, having written ahead to the Hôtel Chevillon for rooms, and had been in that quaint and quiet and picturesque little peasant village no more than a few hours when we laughed at the idea of mountain-climbing, and wouldn't have stirred from where we were for all the king's horses or all the king's men, and thanked my cousins with tears in our eyes for having been so firm and high-handed and dictatorial with us.

My cousin's friends, the Misses Farnleigh, lived on the outside of the village in a house on a hill which looked down upon the little river, the Loing, and upon a disused mill beside a weir and upon meadows and level woods for miles beyond. The house was newer than most of the other villagers' cots (which were very old indeed—plain white-plastered oblongs with a peaked roof). It had been built by a Russian painter, some twenty years before, who had meant to live there but had given it up and sold his house to a local farmer, who let it, when he could, at a low price. It was a very simple place but roomy and comfortable, and the noise of falling waters from the weir was always in your ears there, which Naïla loved more than anything else. She said it soothed her to sleep at night.

The inn—famous, a quarter of a century before, as a rendezvous for artists, but now deserted by that most fickle of clientèles—fronted upon the narrow main street of the village, but gave, behind, upon a pleasant garden that dropped, in terraces, down a long stretch to the banks of the sluggish river, where there was an enormous yellow-green weeping-willow tree, and under it, made fast to stakes, a fleet of flat,

unwieldy bâteaux de pêche et de promenade. The garden was emphatically a jardin bosquet, and had many little open rustic summer-houses where one might lunch or dine much more delightfully than in the long salle à manger with its wall frieze of panels painted by forgotten guests of palmier days.

Also there was in one corner of the grounds a pavillon—a sort of extension of the empty stable and rémise—with two large bedrooms above (and a balcony) and a dining-room beneath, and a small garden of its own, all shut away and enclosed by hedges and a gate. We voted this much nicer than the inn itself and, on the second day, had our belongings transferred there and engaged the place for the rest of the summer. We engaged the three best boats too, and kept the keys of their padlocks in our pockets.

So we settled down to as quiet and peaceful and pleasant a life as any one could wish for, we three men at the inn (where old Mme. Chevillon cooked for us like a cordon bleu, and mothered us like an elderly hen, and told us, in her peasant patois, harrowing stories of '70, when the Prussians were afield, and the middle span of the ancient stone bridge got blown up), Marian and Naïla with the two English ladies in the house on the hill.

Nearly everybody painted—or tried to. The Bart. and I made endless sketches along the river, or in the garden, or by quiet wood-lanes where there were tall, slim birches shivering in the breeze (like lap-dogs, as Henry poetically expressed it); the two Misses Farnleigh made lady-like acquarelles of the old mill, or the stone bridge, or the ruins of the castle of Blanche de Castille, which stands in the middle of the village near the church; even Henry tried once more to paint trees and other outdoor things, but

failed, because he couldn't be made to understand that distance and atmosphere made any difference in the color of objects. His trees were quite as bright green a mile away as they were close before him.

But he became a famous fisherman and would sit in one of the flat-bottomed bâteaux de pêche for hours together (especially if Naïla was there with him) and come home as proud as a camel with three wretched little gudgeons no longer than his hand to show for a half-day's work.

I mustn't, however, give the impression that we spent all our time in toil (or even the half of it). We made endless excursions on bicycles (hired from M. Paul, Mme. Chevillon's taciturn son and heir) into the near-by forest of Fontainebleau—taking our lunch with us and returning by moonlight—or, along the highroad to Nemours, or even farther, or in a dozen other directions. We played tennis on the Farnleighs' rather uneven lawn, and were beaten in turn by the Bart.—even the elder Miss Farnleigh, the thin one, who, despite her six and forty years, had retained the most astonishing agility and endurance, and was by no means a bad player. We had rowing races in the raft-like bâteaux de promenade (to the astonishment of the peasantry) and we swam in the river every afternoon, and, in hot weather, every early morning, too.

I became very fond of the two Misses Farnleigh—as gentle souls as ever lived—and in particular the younger one, who had once—long since—hoped to become a good painter, mistaking, like many another poor soul, a passion for a talent. She had worked at it faithfully for years only to find at last that she wasn't getting on, and the experience hadn't saddened or embittered her in the very least. She was as cheerful as if all her life had been sunshine and roses.

She adored Naïla (as did everybody else, for that matter) and followed her about with rugs and cushions and glasses of a horrid liquid which she concocted herself and called "raspberry shrub." The dear lady was quite tremulous with excitement and delight over what she termed "The Romance" (meaning Naïla's and Henry's obvious pleasure in each other's society), and said what a beautiful couple they made, and asked me if I thought Mr. Trent had "spoken" yet. I hadn't the heart to tell her that he never meant to speak at all—never at least to my poor cousin—and that she had quite misunderstood the situation. So she was always making it easy for the two to be alone together (not that they cared whether it was easy or not), and took Henry's part when the rest of us attacked him, to his face, for this or that sin committed, and got quite pink and wrought up about it.

She had, in a sense, her reward, I think, for Henry was even more attentive and deferential and winning with her than he was with other ladies—and that is to say a good deal. It was delightful to see them together.

I told the Bart. what Miss Farnleigh had said about the Romance. I was almost afraid to, for I knew what his feelings were, or had been, about Naïla, and I didn't want to harrow them up again. But, as it turned out, I needn't have hesitated, for the good old Bart. had either overcome the feeling which had inspired that memorable outburst in Paris months before, or he had hidden it away so deep down in him that it was buried and as good as dead. When I spoke to him he never even winced. He pulled his mustache (as he always did when very thoughtful) and knocked out his pipe, and filled it and burned his fingers with the match, and said "Saperlipopette!" and other things,

But afterward, when the pipe was drawing well, and the burned finger had been rubbed, he said:

"I shouldn't wonder if the good old soul was more or less right, you know. Have you watched Henry during the past two weeks? Well, keep an eye on him for a bit and see what you'll see."

That speech seemed to me so absurd, coming from the old Bart., who knew all about both sides of the affair, that I had to laugh. But I took his advice and watched Henry for a few days. It was hard to make out just how much I was being affected by the idea those two had put into my head, but I confess I thought I did detect a new something in Henry. It was (or seemed to be) a certain look in his eyes when Naïla was present; a certain tone in his voice that he seemed to reserve exclusively for her; a dozen little signs that were significant or insignificant according as you regarded them. I ran to the Bart. with these discoveries, and the Bart. looked wise and benignant, like an elderly philosopher, and said, Well, he'd told me so, hadn't he?

We took, he and I, a long walk late that night along the silent country roads, with the stars overhead (there was no moon), and the gray dust soft under our feet, and live things rustling now and then in the thickets by the roadside, and little, pallid, greenish glow-worms luring their gentlemen friends (or trying to), and a dog barking very far away in the night, or a distant train whistling, and, in our nostrils, cool, damp, swampy odors mingled with the fragrance of flowers and the pungent dryness of dust and a spice of wood-smoke from somewhere near at hand.

And once a nightingale made thrilling, heavenly music quite close before us.

I pointed out with some heat how absurd and ridiculous our fancies about Henry and Naïla were, and how impossible, in view of Henry's—what shall one call it?—dedication to a lifelong quest. I said we were all struggling with conventional, preconceived ideas about the relations of young people of opposite sexes. If they were seen a great deal together, they must be, in the nature of things, in love. But, I said, you couldn't apply that to Henry.

The Bart. wagged his head at me and wasn't so sure—not by a lot. He became quite surprisingly eloquent.

"You see, old Bill, the trouble with you—and with Henry, too—is, you've been leaving out of consideration the fact that live flesh-and-blood women are a good deal nearer to the emotions than spooks ever were or ever can be. You're forgetting that Henry is, after all, a human being, and that human beings fall in love, no matter what ideas of dedication and devotion, etcetera, they may have in their minds. Dogs delight to bark and bite, and men to fall in love—all for the same reason, because it's their nature to.

"And this 'love,' now! Love, old Bill, is the very deuce of a thing to knock spooks and idées fixes and solemn dedications and holy quests into a cocked hat; it's the very devil of a thing to turn you upside down and shake your pockets out! Don't you go forgetting that love has worked miracles before ever Henry Trent was born or told his first fairy story. And don't you go weeping and gnashing your teeth over it, either. It's the very best thing that could possibly happen to him, as I told you once before. If he'll only fall in love with Naïla hard enough, and marry her, I guarantee he'll be a cured man in a very short time." (The Bart. spoke as if Henry were suffering from some odd malady—and, if it comes to that, perhaps he was.) I

wasn't so sure. I'd known Henry a pretty long time, and I knew how every fibre in him was bound round about his lifelong endeavor.

I saw a dreadful prophetic picture of him, married to little Naïla, and quite peacefully happy for a while—then, bit by bit, the old lure returning upon him—the old call—the old passion—the old necessity to search and search and never give over searching until he was dead. And that meant a tragedy so dreadful that I couldn't bear even to think of it.

I said something of this kind to the Bart., who didn't altogether agree with me, but I could see that the thought affected him, for all that, and cooled his enthusiasm, so that presently I got him off the subject, and we talked of other things.

The name of Mary Borrow came up, I don't know how. It wasn't I who spoke it. And I wouldn't ask questions about her, but I think the Bart. knew that I was like a thirsty man in a desert, and her name like drops of sweet water to me, for he went on to talk of her—he had seen her in London, and Lady Crail, too—and to tell me how her friends were wondering why her engagement to Archie Fellowes hadn't been announced, as every one expected. It seemed there were those who said she had refused him, and others that he hadn't screwed up his courage to the proposing-point. They were often seen together, and Fellowes betrayed no change in his humble and worshipful attitude, but the thing seemed, for some reason, to hang fire, and London would very much like to know why.

So, for that matter, would an obscure student of painting, but he didn't dare to ask—he considered himself all but pledged not to.

The flat German girl whom Henry had likened to a rolled umbrella with a crook handle came to visit my cousins in July, and, toward the end of that month, Jimmy Fordyce, who had been in England, came to join us at the inn. So we were a family of some proportions, as you see, and took a sort of feudal possession of that sleepy, hidden-away village, and waked it to a degree of life and gayety it hadn't known for more than two decades. I don't know how well the village liked all this bustle, but I know the Chevillons were delighted, for they had fallen upon lean years, since Grez went out of fashion among artists, and often were weeks at a time without any guest at all—save one, a regular pensionnaire, who had been with them every summer for a long time, and was sent there by his family in Holland to be hidden away, because he was a hopeless drunkard in spite of many attempts by doctors and "cures" to save him, and, from being a young man of brilliant promise—even of brilliant performance—at the bar, had sunk into a state of something almost like imbecility.

He was a big man with enormously broad shoulders, and unkempt black hair, and little, watery, red-rimmed blue eyes, and a face much swollen and blotched from alcoholic poisoning, for he drank absinthe more or less perpetually, with eau de vie in it, and always went to bed drunk. Old Mme. Chevillon, who wept over him like a mother, had once tried the experiment of refusing him drink altogether, so he went to the estaminet across the way, and got extra drunk there, and, discovering his bedroom door closed and the knob hard to find, smashed the lower panels, crawled in through them, and slept that night on the floor.

Sometimes he hired a donkey-cart and drove about the country, stopping here and there at roadside cafés, and

then he fell out of the cart, and was found hours later and carried back to Grez. A sad and pitiful object! Henry couldn't bear the sight of the Dutchman, who made him fairly ill, and no more could the Bart. (though feeling very sorry for him), but I talked to him sometimes when he was himself, and Fordyce sat with him for hours together, and said the man's conversation was often the most brilliant and witty and profound he had ever heard in all his life.

Before I leave the subject I must tell one more thing about poor Van Torp which seemed to me touching and pathetic. He had a passion for cats. Out of the wreck and ruin of all his earthly (and, so far as I know, heavenly) affections, he had preserved this one tenderness. He had cats in his room, he had them about him when he sat shakily absorbing drink in the garden. He had quantities of milk and bread and fish and the like brought to his room each morning, and, each morning, at about eight o'clock, he would thrust his black, uncombed head out of his window and call—often in trembling, hoarse, unsteady tones. Then up through the garden would come racing cats—droves and herds and shoals and schools of cats—cats of every age and degree and color and sex and previous condition of servitude. It was as if he of Hamelin had made a mistake and piped a cat-call instead of a call for rats. I have never before or since seen so many cats all at the same time. I didn't know there *were* so many. But all of them got fed by this drunken, swinish, brilliant, and witty ne'er-do-well from Holland, and doubtless loved him for it more faithfully than he had ever been loved by human beings, even at his best.

And the love of a cat is not to be despised—especially the love of a countless legion of them, such as Van Torp had.

Naïla came to me one morning, all giggles, like a little school-girl, and asked if I had noticed anything peculiar about her of late. I said I'd noticed she was a peculiarly nice person if that was what she meant. But it wasn't.

"My clothes are all too tight, Bill. We're having to let them out! I'm getting fat—fat, do you understand?" She rolled up one sleeve, and, true enough, her arm, though still as slender as a child's, was no longer transparently thin and fragile and pathetic-looking. The elbow was no longer its greatest girth. So then I looked her over with great care, as if she'd been a horse I was going to buy, and the change in my cousin was quite plain to see. She was almost another woman—though by no means yet a picture of health and vigor.

I was as delighted as she was, and squeezed her hands in mine, and gave her two big, brotherly kisses, and we congratulated each other, and all but danced and sang. The odd thing was that I had never noticed how she was improving. It had come about so imperceptibly that if you had asked me, the day before, to describe my cousin Naïla, I rather think I should have given the sad picture of her that had so overwhelmed me, nearly a year since, in the Rue du Luxembourg.

That afternoon I spoke to Henry about it, saying,

"Have you noticed anything about Naïla's looks?" Henry said no, except that she looked very pretty and always had. Besides, he never had thought much about her personal appearance, anyhow. What did it matter?

But the Bart. had been aware of her improving health and strength—to his great delight—and so had Fordyce, and so had the Misses Farnleigh, who said, with some show of reason, that they knew a great deal more about it than

we mere men did, and that, if nothing unfortunate happened, we might expect Naïla, before the year was out, to be as well as anybody — though always delicate, for she had never enjoyed really rude health in all her life.

I think I was as glad on Marian's account as on Naïla's, for I knew what an unceasing strain of care and loving apprehension and anguish and terror had possessed her during those past years, and I knew that the strain must be greatly eased now. I said something of the kind to her, when we were out together in one of the flat-bottomed boats near the upper weir, and Marian was much affected and wept. It was, somehow, dreadful to see her weep—like a man giving way to his emotion. It made me uncomfortable. I thought she seemed rather hysterical and quite unlike herself. But when she had at last dried her eyes, she asked me the oddest question—the only question about herself that I had ever known the silent Marian to propound. She leaned forward in the boat toward me (we were drawn up by the riverside under overhanging boughs) and said:

"Willie, do you think me hopelessly plain? Is that what a—the average man would think? Please tell me the exact truth without paying silly compliments or trying to save my feelings! I happen to want to know."

I nearly fell out of the boat with pure astonishment, and, for a moment, thought my cousin's little attack of hysterics had left her light-headed.

It was as if the old Bart. had demanded to know if I didn't think him supremely beautiful.

She must have seen my surprise, for she gave a little, hard laugh and said,

"Yes, it does sound rather mad, doesn't it?" But then I recovered myself and cried out:

"Good heavens! dear Marian, I don't think you plain at all! Nobody does. What an idea!" I had a sudden inspiration, and told her what my mother had said, years before—that she might be almost a beauty (I dropped the "almost" though) if she would only take a little thought and trouble about it.

"And then, there's Henry!" said I. "Didn't Henry spend days, last spring, painting you? Of course you're not plain!"

It seemed to be Marian's emotional day, for she covered her face with her hands, and I could see that it was flushed red, even to the ears. I was immensely intrigued and interested. I went on to tell her in a frank, brotherly way what I thought ought to be done—that she ought to find a becoming fashion of doing her hair, instead of pulling it straight back from her high, square forehead, and that a general loosening of the plain, severe lines ought to take place everywhere (except at her waist, which was, Heaven knows! loose enough already). Also I deprecated the unfortunate habit she had of pressing her really beautiful lips tight together and spoiling their natural curves.

Marian listened to me with great interest, and thanked me many times over—especially about the coiffure, which she said she would ask the Misses Farnleigh to experiment with (not quite the ideal advisers for that, I thought), and the clothes, which she would have a "go" at when she returned to Paris. But she made no further explanation of her views save the vague statement that she'd never thought much about clothes and such things (which I found very easy to believe).

We heard voices just then, and turned to look. Henry and Naïla in one of the other boats were making a leisurely

progress toward the upper reaches of the stream—a half-mile of sheltered, shady bays and nooks. We called to them, and they waved their hands; and Henry, who was standing up in the stern of the boat sculling with a single oar, tried to splash us, but couldn't, because he was too far away.

So they went on, and presently were out of sight behind an island of reeds; but Marian sat for a long time quite still, looking after them, and I didn't quite like the expression that I thought I saw on her face. It made me vaguely uncomfortable and cross and uneasy. It seemed to me to cast a shadow over things that had been so pleasant and sunny.

It made me sorry for her, too; but that didn't lessen the discomfort much.

I believe it was the next day that we had an encounter which made me uncomfortable all over again—another shadow athwart the sunlight. Naïla and Marian and Henry and I were bicycling in the forest of Fontainebleau, over beyond Marlotte, toward the Gorges de Franchard, when, in a little road off the Route d'Orléans, we came upon a lady sitting under a tree beside one of those new-fangled motor-cars (voitures automobiles—noisy, ill-smelling, treacherous vehicles, which a few rash souls prophesied would soon be seen in thousands and in every land).

The prophecy has been fulfilled!

The lady was the Countess Samaroff. She hailed us with a well-nigh hysterical delight, and made us get off our bicycles and keep her company. It appeared the motor-car had broken down, and Count Samaroff had started off on foot, nearly an hour before, toward Fontainebleau in

the hope of finding another car, or more probably a horse, to tow them back to their inn.

I should almost have preferred to find the devil sitting under a tree in that pleasant, shady, forest road, for I heartily disliked the tall Russian lady, with her feline ways and her yellow hair and her mouth painted red, and thought her very bad, indeed, for Henry. I had been devoutly hoping that their orbits had crossed for the last time.

I think she knew something of my feeling, for she made a little face of amusement and defiance at me and, after a few words with my cousins (who didn't like her, either), turned her back upon us and began to talk to Henry with great vivacity and, I must confess, some wit—of a not very profound order. Henry seemed very much pleased at the encounter, and quite excited, and talked and laughed and "made the court" in a ready fashion quite surprising to hear. Presently they got up and walked together down to the nearest cross-roads, the Carrefour de la Croix de Sauvray, to see if the rescue-party was in sight. Madame Samaroff never even glanced back at us over her shoulder—the coolest insolence I ever saw.

It took them a long while to make their little reconnaissance, and a long while to come back, and, more than once, I cursed under my breath as I saw them stand still while the Russian lady laid her hand upon Henry's arm and talked to him with an appearance of great earnestness.

"They look very nice together, don't they!" said poor Naïla, gazing after them through her ugly goggles. "They're such opposite types! They become each other; don't you think so, Bill?" I said I thought the Countess Samaroff would become her native country or some other country—*any* country but la belle France—and that I wished she'd go

and prove it. But Naïla, with I don't know what instinct of noble generosity (for she wasn't always so angelic—not by a good deal! She could be as jealous as a tigress if she felt so inclined), said I was very unfair and didn't know grace and beauty when I saw them. Well, there wasn't any doubt about my seeing them. The Russian lady was by no means disposed to conceal her charms. She had on a dress of some rough Oriental silk (Shantung?) that covered her from her throat to her heels, but by some diabolic art was induced to cling to her like a wet bathing-suit. It was quite mediæval, and made her look like Beatrice passing Dante in the street in a certain well-known English picture.

I asked Marian what she thought of Henry's friend, and Marian made the one joke that she had ever been known to utter (but it wasn't said in mirth, you may well believe! I fairly heard her teeth snap). She said, reversing Talleyrand's famous mot:

"Impossible de moins découvrir et de plus montrer." And I laughed so hard that the Russian lady—the two had come within earshot by that time—demanded to know what I found amusing. I grinned at her, and said my cousin had said something very witty, but that wit lost its savor when repeated. She glanced suspiciously at Marian's impassive face, and back at me, and didn't seem quite so pleased with herself, but, by great good-fortune, a cart bearing her husband turned the corner just then, and, after greetings and introductions all round, and commiserations over the mishap, we made our adieus and rode away.

I was almost (but not quite) inclined to forgive Mme. Samaroff for her proselytizing activities, and to be sorry for my dislike of her. Her husband looked an ill-tempered beast—a sour, bristly little man with a mustache

like a tooth-brush, and hair like a hair-brush, and jewelry hanging all over him. He looked like a blond Jew, but I suppose he couldn't have been—not with that name.

I said to Henry on the way home that I thought his yellow-haired friend had precious bad manners. Henry was quite genuinely astonished and rather hurt, and wanted to know what she had done. He said he thought her very nice, indeed, and most amusing. She made him laugh, he said. And she was to be in Paris again for the next winter, and had made him promise to come and see her, which he certainly meant to do if he had time.

There wasn't anything to say to that, so I groaned and held my tongue.

But these two little shadows, which, perhaps, I have accented too heavily, passed as cloud-shadows pass from a sunny hillside, and were forgotten in no time at all. Altogether, I look back upon that summer at Grez as a period of time wholly delightful, and I am quite sure every one of us watched its end approach with real regret, even though we may have looked forward with pleasure to the autumn's work.

Henry, to be sure, began to have, late in August, rather disturbing letters from home, for it appeared that the Rhode Island aunt wasn't at all well, and, I fancy, his mother used that—as she would have used any other excuse—by way of worrying him to come home. But there didn't seem to be any immediate danger, and he didn't mean to go until there was. I cabled to my Uncle George, who was in Blandford and wrote me long letters once a month, asking him to find out the exact truth if he could, and he replied that the old lady was indeed far from strong, but hadn't the slightest intention of dying for many years yet.

My uncle continued to speak, in these monthly letters, of his plans for making me a visit in Paris, but, though I urged him all I knew to come, he seemed to find great difficulty in making a start, and I hardly expected ever to see him on that side of the Atlantic.

Lady Crail wrote to me, I think, twice or three times during the summer—once in June, from London, where she and Mary were having the gayest of times, and, later on, from the Engadine, whence she meant to go to Aix, and promised to spend a week or two in Paris toward the end of September.

But no word of an engagement!

So at last, when August was done and the days began to shorten and the evenings grow cool, we said good-bye to that quaint, sleepy village and the still river and the house on the hill (that had been so pleasant a gathering-place in the evening, to play games in, or tell stories, or, best of all, to listen in the darkness while Naïla sang), and to the pavillon in the inn-garden, and to the good Mme. Chevillon—not forgetting poor Van Torp and his legions of cats—we said a regretful good-bye to all these, and turned our faces once more toward Paris.

For there was work to do.

XVI

IMMEDIATELY upon our return to Paris Henry and I started in again to work at Julian's under the good M. Constant (and M. J. P. Laurens also). We found most of the old students there, and, of course, a flock of nouveaux as well. Meunier was back from Brittany, where he had been sketching at Pont Aven and Concarneau. He looked very brown and well, and had a new set of beautiful symphonic clothes to go with his color. Laplace, who wasn't brown at all, but as pallid as usual, was in his place, downstairs, making thunderous noises and bullying the nouveaux, who stood in great awe of him. He had spent the summer at San Sebastian with his cousins the Spanish royal family —Maman la Reine et le petit Alfonso—of whom he spoke very kindly but said it wasn't too gay, là bas, and he meant to break off with them because court etiquette bored him. He asked with great interest how little Mlle. Naïla did, and was delighted to hear how she had improved in health. He promised to call at the earliest opportunity and, I believe, did, and Naïla was as pleased at the meeting as Laplace was.

But nobody was as pleased over anything as I was when I found that my white salon picture, "Le Reveil," which I had left in the hands of a well-known dealer, had been sold, and at an excellent price. The purchaser was a rich English milord who hadn't wanted his name to be known,

but I found out afterward that it was the husband of my stout marchioness. Lady Crail told me.

The Bart. had begun work on two portrait-busts, one of Berthe la Rousse, which he meant to reproduce in tinted marble, and one of Jellaby the æsthete, which he caricatured a little, and made very striking and picturesque. Jellaby was entranced with it, and used to walk round it for hours at a time.

Naïla, as soon as she had settled down in the Avénue de l'Observatoire, went straight away to her doctor, a very able and celebrated gentleman, who had been familiar with her case for two years or more, and submitted herself to a thorough examination. She went there I know with high hopes and a good deal of confidence; but, alas! got no more than half a loaf and came away in a state of great depression. The doctor, to be sure, was surprised and delighted at the improvement in her general health, and told her that she might expect, within a few months, to put away her goggles, for her eyesight had been almost keeping pace with her bodily condition. But it appeared that a heart weakness which he had hoped would pass, if ever her constitution got built up again, hadn't passed at all, and showed signs of remaining chronic. It was a serious weakness, too, though seldom painful: one of those irreparable lesions—Damoclean swords—suspended death-sentences—under which so many of us, whether we are aware of it or not, go through our lives, never knowing in what quiet moment of sleep, or, more likely, at what instant of convulsive laughter over something very funny indeed, or at what time of extreme fear or excitement or supreme joy, the lesion may give way forever—the sword fall, and death come in a flash: never knowing whether the end will be

to-morrow (or to-day), or at the end of long and happy years.

Naïla came straight from that momentous consultation to the Rue d'Assas. It was mid-afternoon, and I was in the studio up-stairs, but heard her voice in the garden, and went down at once by the outside stair. Marian passed me at the foot of the stair going toward the street. She said:

"Naïla's there," and went on without another word, but her face was so white and miserable that I was shocked by it and knew there must be bad news in store.

I found Naïla in her comfortable, shady corner, where the long cane-chair and the rugs, and the tea-table (covered at that hour with papers and magazines) were. She looked up at me with a little pale smile, and put out her hand and drew me down beside her, saying:

"Oh, dear Bill, I'm so very wretched! I want you to cry on." And I put my arms about her shoulders (very frail shoulders still, they were), and she did cry on me for a long time with her face hidden in my coat. She had pulled her hat off, and thrown it on the ground.

But after a long time she dried her tears (it was the oddest and most pathetic sight to watch them come trickling down the poor child's cheeks from under those dreadful goggles, out of eyes that one couldn't see!) and sat up, still leaning against me for comfort, and told me what the doctor had said. At that I was quite heartbroken, and wanted to cry on *her* shoulder, but didn't, for things were already quite damp enough without that. Naïla said, thoughtfully:

"You know, I expect it's a kind of warning to me from Up Above somewhere—a kind of jerk on the reins to pull me up short. I was running away, dear Bill, in a sort of

fashion. I'd got so much better and stronger that I was full of the wildest, most incredible, most absurd hopes of—of things that mustn't be hoped for. I'd begun to forget that they were impossible for good reasons quite outside myself. I'd thought—oh, perfectly mad thoughts! I can't talk about them, not even to you. Yes, I was running away and never realized it. Now I do realize it, and a good thing, too!

"Bill, dear, do you believe in a future life—rewards and punishments—all the sort of thing we were taught when we were children? Do you?"

I squirmed and hesitated and backed and filled and said I didn't quite know; that I should like to; that it would be very comforting; that it was a charming and poetic idea, and I wished with all my heart I could really take such a personal, individualistic view of the Great Scheme; that my opinion wasn't worth a sou anyhow, beside the opinion of the parsons, whose business it was to know about such things, and who were so very sure that it was silly for an outsider not to take their expert word for it. Naïla laughed over my distress, but got grave again, and said:

"Well, *I* believe it. I believe it with all my heart and soul. I believe there's a God who is big enough to look out for everybody separately (and sparrows, too) and see that they get paid in the end. Anything else would be so hideously unfair, dear Bill! Think of a wretched little rat like me—think of the much wretcheder rats still—who haven't got Marians and Bills and Barts. and Miss Farnleighs and—and Henrys, to cry on and be petted and spoiled by! It's inconceivable that they should drag out a maimed, thin-blooded life of suffering, and then—just come to an end. What would be the *use* of it? I'm sure there must be more

reason in things than that. And so I'm sure that somewhere there's being saved up something quite incredibly wonderful and beautiful and heavenly for *me*. Otherwise I don't think I should care to go on."

I couldn't think of anything to say to that. It seemed to me there wasn't any answer—least of all for the likes of me to frame—a poor young man who knew less about matters of theology and the hereafter and all that, than any one living, and got quite dizzy and frightened and small and lonely when he tried to think of them, and so put them all out of his mind, trusting, in a blind, vague way, that if he lived decently, and as unselfishly as possible, and worked his hardest, and did no harm to his neighbor, things would somehow come right, and the Great Scheme be fulfilled in its good time. So I held my cousin a little tighter, which seemed to comfort her, and she went on at quite a length with her theological gropings, and seemed to find comfort in those, too, but I didn't listen, for I was thinking of what she had said before she propounded that unanswerable question. I had no doubt as to what she meant. I couldn't have. It was Henry! Poor Naïla had been hoping wild hopes—winging airy flights. Alas! she was brought to earth again, now. And so *that* matter was disposed of. But with what ruthless cruelty!

Henry himself came upon us there a half-hour later. He had been across the river and had got detained, and was very impatient and flushed and eager. He began to bombard Naïla with questions almost before he was within speaking-distance. I felt in the way, and so made excuses and left them alone there in the garden, going back up-stairs to the studio, where I walked the floor and smoked many pipes and felt very rebellious against Naïla's God (and mine, and

everybody's). It seemed to me that she was having so much more than her fair share of suffering. I thought of what she had said about the something quite incredibly wonderful and beautiful and heavenly that, she believed, was being saved up for her somewhere, and, with all my heart, I hoped it was true, and tried to believe it, and perhaps did.

"Anything else would be so hideously unfair, dear Bill!"

I should think it must have been an hour later when Henry came stumbling up the outer stair and into the room where I was. His face was dead white, his hair rumpled, his eyes staring. He looked like a man who had seen a ghost—and behaved like it, too. I asked him where Naïla was, and he said she'd gone. Marian came for her, it seems.

I had come to anchor on the piano-stool by that time, but Henry fell to walking up and down the studio, missing his way, now and then, and bumping into things. He seemed quite dazed and bewildered, and I began to be frightened about him. I couldn't believe he had worked himself up into such a state as this just over poor Naïla's bad news—cruel blow though that was to all of us.

He hadn't.

I got the truth out of him presently—or a part of it. The whole truth I never knew—I had to imagine, as best I could, the scene which had taken place between the two of them below in our shady garden. It is enough to say (and it's all I *can* say) that somehow, in the midst of it, by the light of some sudden flash of understanding, Henry's blind eyes had been opened upon himself so that he saw what we others had seen months back in the summer-time.

It may have been the shock of Naïla's new misfortune

that had made him realize how dear to him she was. I don't know. Such a shock has opened new unguessed worlds of vision to all of us at some time in our lives.

He was aghast over it—stunned, bewildered, completely overcome. He was like a frightened child, whose first instinct, in the face of utter panic, is to hide under the bedclothes. He wanted to run away somewhere at once. He wanted to start that very night for Spain—for Switzerland—for Africa—any hole to hide himself in. And the next instant he wanted to rush straight off to the Avénue de l'Observatoire where Naïla was. I actually had to restrain him by physical force.

"I never knew!" cried poor Henry. "I never for a minute suspected it. Bill, I give you my word of honor, I didn't! I thought— Oh, damn it! I thought she was like a sister to me—a very dear sister, like other fellows' sisters, only closer and—and lovelier. I hadn't the faintest idea. . . .

"We got on so well! She understood better than anybody else—you or the Bart. or anybody. And when she sang to me. . . . Great heavens! . . . And out there in the country—at Grez. . . .

"I was blind as an owl—blind as a bat—blind as all the bats there are! I thought we could go on like that forever. It never once occurred to me. . . .

"But down there in the garden, a half-hour ago, when she—she told me that she. . . . Curse it, I can't say it! . . . that she might have to . . . die, then I knew. I knew then, at last, that I couldn't . . . that if I should lose her I'd . . . I don't know what . . . die myself, I expect. I daren't even think of it. It makes everything go mad in my head when I try. I can't imagine living without her. It's impossible!"

He scrambled to his feet (we'd been sitting on one of the long divans), and his eyes were quite glassy with excitement and terror.

"I want to go to her! Hang it, Bill, let me be! Let me go to her! D'you realize that she might die to-morrow —to-night? She may be dead this very moment. *You* don't know. Let me go to her!" He was quite beside himself at this dreadful thought, and I had to hold him, or he would actually have been off, hatless, white-faced, and staring. I said:

"I'll let you go, old Henry, in ten minutes—or even five, but you've got to listen to me quite quietly first. I sha'n't be long. Calm down, now, like a good chap, and listen, and then, if you like, you shall go."

So I got him down on the divan once more, and, as gently as I could, recalled to him the great thing he had, for the very first time in his life, I believe, quite forgotten.

What of the Unknown Lady—the Introuvable?

Henry gave a great gasp and began to tremble. The strength seemed to go out of him like the starch out of a collar in a rain-storm. He crumpled up among the cushions with his hands over his face, and groaned and stammered, and said he wished he was dead—he wished he'd never been born at all. What was the good of him, after all — a miserable, haunted, half-human lunatic that was bound fast to something he couldn't reach and never should be able to reach, so that he mightn't live a sane human life like other people?

"What's the good of it all?" cried poor Henry. "Damn it, Bill, what's the good of it? What does it all mean? There must be some meaning to a thing like that—some use for it. . . .

"*But what if there isn't?* You know, sometimes I get fits of horrible black panic and wonder if I'm—what you said once—just a kind of plain maniac. And it gives me such a fit of horrors that I nearly *am* a maniac then and there." He sat up and stared at me quite wildly. But, after a moment, and before I could find anything to say, Henry sobered down a little and shook his head.

"No, I don't believe that. I'm just making a frightened noise. Don't you listen to me, Bill! I'm upset. This is the sort of thing a chap ought to lock himself into a room with and have out by himself. I'm not a maniac—not in any ordinary sense—though I'm not saying I sha'n't become one before I die."

He made a sudden face and turned his back on me. I knew he was thinking of Naïla.

"Anyhow," he said, after a time, "anyhow, I'm not free . . . or fit . . . to go to her. I daren't and I mustn't. Naïla mustn't know how I . . . feel about her. She thinks it's what I thought it was—until to-day: something . . . brotherly. And that's the way she feels about me—like a sister. She mustn't ever know."

He got up and began to walk about, with his head hanging and his hands in his pockets.

"I've got to get away. That's plain—for a time, at least. I can't stay here and—see her every day. I couldn't do it. I couldn't. She'd be sure to find out. And—I couldn't trust myself." He faced me miserably.

"I wish I could understand it—what it means. Here am I: *You* know what I've been looking for and working for and living for and dreaming of, all my life long. There's been just that one thing for me in all the world. I've hardly noticed that anything else or anybody else existed. It's

been the biggest part of me. All my life I've just been *waiting* and *waiting* and *waiting!*

"And now comes Naïla, and, all at once, *she's* the biggest part of me too. We've grown so close together that we hardly have to speak. We each know what the other's going to think or say—quite without words.

"What does it mean? *I* can't fall in love. It's impossible. All that part of me is shut up—locked in—bolted down. It's waiting, I tell you, waiting!

"I don't understand."

I quoted the Bart. to him—how that he was, after all, a human being in spite of his Great Quest, and how it was as natural for human beings to fall in love as for dogs to bark and bite. I suggested that his feeling for the Unknown Lady had hardly been a human feeling at all, but something imaginative and soulful and on another plane altogether. It struck me that that was quite an original and valuable thought.

Henry seemed to hear me out with great patience, but I doubt he was really listening at all. At the end he sighed, and thanked me touchingly for having borne with him. He spoke only once more of Naïla. He said quite quietly:

"If she dies I shall die too, you know. I'm sure of that."

Then he went away to his own room, shutting the door behind him, and I didn't see him again that day.

I talked it over with the Bart., later on, who was disposed to blame me for not letting Henry rush off to Naïla and tell her he loved her, and marry her before either of them had time to catch their breaths. I told him Naïla wouldn't have consented, and, anyhow, even if she had, what about after-

ward—when Henry *had* had time to catch his breath, and think of the "Introuvable"? And the Bart. couldn't find much more to say to that than he had found at Grez, when we discussed it for the first time.

There seemed to be just a spark of his old feeling left in him, however, for he observed that Henry still seemed to be somewhat more excited over his own point of view than over poor Naïla's. But I reproached him, and told him what Henry had said about that very thing—that he still imagined Naïla's feelings to be those of a sister. So the Bart. once more apologized to everybody concerned, and we went off to dinner at Lavenue's, and did ourselves very well indeed, and afterward battled royally, far into the night, with Fordyce and Ames the Australian and Jellaby and McNaughten, over how far it was legitimate to tell unpleasant truths about people in the portraits you painted of them. I forget how that momentous question was settled—perhaps it wasn't settled at all, for I still observe, among painter-folk, a certain difference of opinion about it.

However, "be that as it may" (as Fordyce used to observe), Henry's immediate difficulty was settled, or, if you prefer, postponed, by the direct interference of fate or chance or providence or the act of God (or whatever agency you choose to ascribe it to—I'm no theologian, as I have already pointed out). For the very next morning, before we were out of our beds, there came a cablegram from his mother saying that the Rhode Island aunt had suffered a relapse, wasn't expected to live more than a fortnight, and had expressed a desire to see Henry before she died. We caught up a Paris *Herald* and found there was a Lloyd steamer sailing that afternoon from Cherbourg for New York. Henry packed a hasty assortment of clothes, drove to the steamship

office in the Rue Scribe, from there to the special boat-train, and was off almost before any one realized it. There had been no time for talk about plans or work or when he meant to return—no time for talk of any kind except the practical, immediate matters of necessity. But at the station Henry said to me when we bade each other good-bye:

"You'll tell Naïla how it was, Bill—that I had to rush away without a word? You'll explain it to her?" And I said I would, and so he got into the train and was gone.

I drove straight to the Avénue de l'Observatoire and there found Naïla stretched out on a couch in her salon looking rather white and weak. She seemed very glad of my call, and explained that she had got up that morning feeling seedy and so was having a rest. I told her, without prelude, how Henry had been called to America, and had gone in such a hurry that there hadn't been time for good-byes, but that I thought we might expect him back in a month or perhaps even less.

Naïla didn't say anything at first, only lay quite still with her face turned away from me, but after a few moments she turned back and said:

"Do you know, dear Bill, I think I'm a little glad. I must tell you something. Oh, do come nearer!" She pulled me down so that my head was close beside hers on the cushions—so close that I couldn't see her face—and held it with one arm, and held my hands in one of hers, and said, in a whisper:

"You remember, precious Bill, what I said to you yesterday about—my having run away and hoping impossible hopes and—and all that sort of thing? Well, of course you didn't know what I meant, but I'm afraid I meant—Henry. No, wait! Listen to me! I want to tell you. I knew all

the time that it was impossible—outrageous—not to be thought of for a sane moment. I knew what Henry was living for and working for. I knew that nothing in the world could ever make him think of me except as a sort of poor, weak, pitiable, rather nice, sympathetic, cousin or sister or friend. I knew that well enough, from the very beginning, but what you *know* doesn't seem to be much good when you—you *feel* about a person. And this summer at Grez when Henry and I were so much together and so close in sympathy—for we *are* that, you know, Bill dear!—and when I found, even more than ever before, how wonderful he is and different from other men (besides being so very, very handsome and romantic-looking), then I found I wasn't always able to remember what—had to be remembered. I found myself rather insane at times and hoped the wildest, most absurd hopes.

"I think, you know, I have really loved him from the very beginning—from that day in the Rue du Luxembourg when you called him back and he looked at me so kindly and sweetly and pityingly out of his blue eyes. I knew then that there wasn't anybody else in the world like him. But I wouldn't let myself think (not consciously, that is) forbidden things, until I got a little mad this summer, and thought them.

"And then, yesterday, that was the hardest thing of all—when you went away, I mean, and left Henry and me together in the garden. I told him about my wretched heart trouble, and Henry was so dreadfully shocked and frightened that he hardly knew what he was saying or doing. He was so sorry for me, you see! He didn't realize what his words sounded like, and, if I hadn't been quite sane and collected and sure of myself, Heaven knows what I mightn't have done.

I might have given myself away completely—let him see exactly how I had been feeling about him! It would have been quite dreadful for poor Henry. He'd have been heartbroken about it, for though he could never, by any possibility, come to love me or any other woman—save one—still he's very, very fond of me, and it would have hurt him cruelly to have seen me hurt.

"And so, dearest Bill, I'm rather glad Henry has gone away for a little while, though it won't be easy to live without him. The month will give me a chance to—to pull myself together again after that trying time yesterday. I couldn't have faced him to-day, you know. I'm sure of it. I should have trembled all over and acted like a little fool. But by the time he comes back I shall be all right again, I promise you. Just you wait and see!"

I was more touched by this naïve disclosure than I could possibly express, though it was no news to me (nor to you either). I kissed my poor little cousin, and held her close in my arms, and told her how sorry and pained and well-nigh heartbroken I was that she should have to suffer so, and I am not sure that I didn't drop a pitying, sympathetic tear. (If I did I take no shame for it. *Sunt lacrymae rerum*—as my Uncle George might have said—and as Æneas *did.*)

But Naïla wouldn't have tears or wailings over her. She said there was nothing to howl about—that Henry had brought into her life all the light and cheer and sweetness she had ever known (with an apologetic caress for W. Castle!), and, as for her falling in love with him, that couldn't be helped (only it *was* to be helped—I should see!). And, besides, she treasured even that and was glad of it—wouldn't have been without it for anything in the world.

"You're not a woman, dear Bill, and so you don't under-

stand. We poor, incomprehensible creatures would much rather love quite hopelessly than never love at all. Just you take my word for it, and cheer up, and don't you go sorrowing about me, for, in my odd way, I'm really a very happy young person."

We talked for a little while longer, about cabbages and other matters (and shoes and ships and sealing-wax), and then I went off home; but at the bottom of the stair I came upon Marian, looking very striking and handsome indeed in a smart hat with red things on it, and her hair loosely and becomingly done, and the first of her new frocks. I hardly recognized her. We spoke together for no more than a moment, for I was in a hurry, but I told Marian that Henry had been called suddenly back to America, and Marian turned very pale and her eyes widened upon me. She seemed unable to speak. Of course I went on to say that he was to return in a month's time, and at that Marian found her tongue and said we should all miss him very much, but I couldn't get that odd, bleak look of hers out of my mind for days. It made me uncomfortable and, quite unjustly, a little angry. I said to myself that she hadn't any right to look like that about Henry. He wasn't hers to turn pale over—not by any manner of means!

XVII

SHE had said the truth, though. We did miss him, all of us. It was astonishing to me how very much that quiet, unobtrusive, rather silent presence of Henry's managed to make its absence felt. Without him the place wasn't the same at all. The studio was empty for him, the garden fairly cried out for his romantic face, Paris itself lost half its charm. As for me, I found the loneliness in our sybaritic abode quite intolerable, and made the Bart. come and sleep in Henry's room—who grumbled aloud over this inconvenience and said I was sentimental. As if he wasn't sentimental about it all himself, and didn't complain a dozen times a day that old Henry was jolly good company, hanged if he wasn't, in spite of his speechless mug!

And the Bart. and I became quite demoralized—turned into a pair of the most shameful (in time, shameless) flâneurs, and wasted many golden hours (each set with sixty diamond minutes) wandering arm-in-arm about the highways and byways of Paris, making foolish purchases at antiquity shops, or sitting in front of the big cafés, or drinking tea at Colombin's or Rumpelmeyer's, and dining afterward in state—in short, disgracefully neglecting our daily toil.

At the end of September Lady Crail and Mary came to Paris for a week on their way north to England. So that gave us another excuse for idleness which we seized upon with great glee. I thought her ladyship looked not very

well and lacked something of her usual spirits, but Mary had never been so beautiful or so gay or so eager to see and do everything there was to be seen and done. We went up and down the river on the bâteaux mouches, we got lost in the Meudon wood (and rained on), we found a street fête and rode the galloping pigs and destroyed clay pipes with a rifle, and every evening we dined out and went on afterward to a theatre.

Once I screwed up my courage and asked Lady Crail how Archie Fellowes's suit was coming on. It seemed to be a sore subject, for her ladyship was rather sharp about it, and said:

"Oh, dear! I do wish they'd make up their minds, one way or the other, and stop shilly-shallying. It's quite getting on my poor old nerves, William. I hate people who back and fill." And afterward she added: "Heaven knows *I* don't want to urge anything upon the child."

Perhaps it wasn't quite the thing to do, but, the next day, I brought up the subject again—to Mary when we were alone, I forget where. I spoke with a great elaboration of unconcern and casualness and genial, friendly interest. But Mary looked me in the face and laughed aloud. Presently she said that Archie Fellowes was a dear, but that she didn't want to marry anybody yet awhile—not for ages, in fact. She laughed again and then changed the subject, and no more was to be got out of her *that* day. I mayn't be said to have received very much encouragement in my own hopeless interest, but I was somehow vastly cheered, and that evening made the most brilliant conversation at dinner, and afterward remained awake in my bed until near morning.

Upon so little do youthful hopes feed and batten!

In the midst of all these occupations, however, I found time to paint a portrait of Lady Crail, who gave me five sittings. (Again, though, they were *standings*.) I put my best "licks" into it, as Mary said—who adored American slang—and her ladyship was enchanted and said not even the great S—— could have done more brilliant work, and that it must go to the Royal Academy the next spring. She wanted to pay me for it and was quite hurt when I wouldn't take her check, and gave me a long, motherly lecture upon how I mustn't despise or neglect the business side of my profession.

Well, Heaven—and my patrons—know I haven't! but I couldn't take money from Mary's mother. That was unthinkable.

So this delightfulest of weeks came to its early end and the two visitors went away leaving us quite desolated. They had been very kind and attentive to my cousins, so that it wasn't only the Bart. and I who mourned them. And then at last we really settled down to work, and the daily round became quite respectably regular. We had a letter from Henry, written soon after his arrival in America, in which he said he had found his aunt very low, indeed, but conscious and in control of all her faculties. She seemed to be very much touched and very grateful over his crossing the Atlantic to see her, and clung to him and wanted him near her all the while. He said nothing of his mother, and, by that, I fancied their relations hadn't improved very much. It was the one touch of anything like hardness that I ever observed in Henry—his attitude toward his mother. They simply didn't understand each other. From first to last he never had one ray of sympathy from her over the thing which was greatest of everything in his life, and so, perhaps, he

wasn't so much to be blamed. But neither was she, poor gray goose that had hatched a swan!

If he could have had a mother like mine . . .

Ah!

It was, I believe, just a week after the arrival of this letter, when a cablegram came, saying that the invalid had passed away, quite painlessly and contentedly, and that Henry meant to sail back from New York two or three days after the funeral. Naïla was below in the garden when the message arrived, and I ran down to her at once and told her. Naïla's cheeks flushed pink, and I saw her draw a long, deep breath. She smiled at me and said:

"I'm glad—and ready." And that was all. You must imagine for yourselves what she meant by "ready." I can only guess. Marian, in her turn, said little more. She kept her eyes down and her hands still, and observed:

"We shall all be glad to see him, sha'n't we? Yes, indeed!"

But the Bart. and I were jubilant, for we had been afraid that Henry might be kept away a long time—and so were Fordyce and Ames and McNaughten and the good M. Constant and Mme. Salomon, the concierge (who adored Henry), and so were even the flat German girl and the little Magyar pianist.

You will observe that, in his quiet fashion, old Henry had got himself rather thoroughly beloved.

But in the interval between the coming of his cablegram and the arrival of himself I had a very pleasant encounter with an old friend, and the Bart. and I an encounter less pleasant with a new one (if, indeed, she could be called a friend indeed, which I doubt).

I was crossing the Luxembourg Gardens one afternoon

from the Rue de Medicis on my way home to the Rue d'Assas. The band was playing in the kiosk near the Boulevard St. Michel and a quantity of people, students and models and cocottes and nou-nous and children and shabby old gentlemen with newspapers, was strolling under the trees, or sitting on two-sou iron chairs. I halted for a moment in a shady corner and became aware of a man, near by, leaning against a tree and smoking a cigarette of Caporal. He was a middle-aged man with gray hair and a lean, melancholy face, and he was dressed plainly, but not shabbily, in black, with a soft black hat and a waterfall tie. I thought this man's face had a familiar look but I couldn't place him until he chanced to turn in my direction, then I knew him at once. It was the good M. Anatole Cuvier, the drawing-master of my early days! I ran to him, holding out both my hands and calling his name. M. Anatole didn't know me at all, and looked rather frightened, but when I had told him who I was he was quite overcome by delight and emotion, and the tears came to his eyes and he wrung my hands as hard as he could (which wasn't very hard), and all but embraced me, coram publico.

He exclaimed over how tall and magnificent and beau garçon I had become, swearing that he had foreseen it from my earliest boyhood, and asked me a thousand questions, and laughed and stammered and waved his arms and made as if he would try to embrace me all over again, but didn't. He demanded, with the greatest interest and the prettiest compliments, news as to the health and welfare of my dear mother, whom he called the most beautiful as well as the kindest of her sex. I led him apart among the trees, and told him that she had been dead for more than five years, and the good M. Anatole sat down on an iron chair and

wept bitterly. He was quite beyond speech for some moments, and so, at the sight of this simple, honest grief, and at the memories his face called up to me, so was I. I sat down near by on another chair and waited, and the students who passed glanced at us with a mild pity, wondering, I dare say, what great blow had smitten us there in the Luxembourg Gardens within earshot of an excellent band which was playing the overture to the "Poëte et Paysan." But they didn't stare at us, or jeer, or gather in knots to see what would happen, for in Paris you have your joys and sorrows, your tears and your love-makings in the very middle of the street if you want to (and if you don't impede the traffic), and nobody will look at you for more than an instant—nobody will interfere or laugh or make your business his.

I wish all parts of the world were like that—and so they are, all but the Anglo-Saxon parts.

M. Anatole, when he had at length mastered himself, found that he hadn't a handkerchief, so I gave him mine and he wiped away his tears, and apologized, saying very sadly that I, who had lost that sweet and beautiful and loving spirit out of my life, would understand how severe the blow was to him. She had been his good angel, he said—the lone star in his sky when the world was very dark. She had given him more than mere employment: she had given him cheer and understanding and sympathy and encouragement.

"Un ange de Paradis—je le dis bien. . . . Et maintenant elle est chez elle. Que le bon Dieu lui a du donné une accolade joyeuse! . . . Et croyez moi, mon fils, elle vous régarde, toujours, de sa place, là haut. C'est pas trop loin pour ça."

He talked on, the good M. Anatole, for some time in this simple, affectionate strain, until I became quite unnerved and teary myself and couldn't bear it any longer, and finally got him shunted off upon his own affairs. They were much more prosperous, I was delighted to learn, for he had become chief assistant to M. Gautier, the great decorative painter—an ideal berth for him, since he could paint like the resurrected shade of Raphael Sanzio, but couldn't create to save his skin. He had just returned to Paris from Havre, where he and his chief and two other assistants had been for four months decorating the chancel of a new church with lovely pictures on stucco, and now, after a rest of a few weeks, they were going to begin another work of like magnitude in Paris itself. M. Anatole was very happy in his new career, for it was congenial work and excellently paid, and Gautier was most kind to him. He had that comfortable feeling — which makes for self-respect — that he was actually contributing something valuable to the world, even though his name was never signed to the work he did, and unthinking people would suppose that Gautier did it all.

I congratulated him very warmly, and said how my mother would have been pleased to know of his success, and, in the end, took him off to the studio in the Rue d'Assas, telling him on the way—in answer to his questions—that I had "exposed" the spring past, and got an Honorable Mention, which delighted him beyond measure.

Like everyone else he was enchanted with our garden and with the white-walled studio, but demanded at once to see a specimen of my work. The portrait of Lady Crail was standing at one end of the room waiting for the framer, and M. Anatole sat down before it and examined it with

great care in complete and, I thought, rather anxious silence. But at the end of this he nodded his head with great decision, saying:

"Oui, c'est ça, enfin! Vous avez fait bien, là, mon fils. Je vous en félicité de tout mon cœur." And seldom have I had a compliment touch me more deeply, for he knew good painting from bad, did M. Anatole, and, when it came to his beloved art, he wouldn't tell a lie, not even for me. He was as honest as the daylight, and had no patience with cheapness or pretence or pose or insincerity of any kind. If he praised you, you might be very sure that you deserved it—or at least that he thought you did.

I took him down-stairs and would have introduced him to the Bart., but found that they already had met—some years back. So my old master went away with many more kind and affectionate words and warm hand-clasps, and promises to look in upon us again whenever he could make an opportunity.

The other encounter, to which I have referred, the Bart. and I had at a dinner-party in the Avénue Hoche, and it was with the yellow-haired Countess Samaroff (with her husband, too, for that matter, but he didn't interest me much just then).

The Bart. to his great disgust, for he detested the woman as heartily as I did, had to take her in, but I sat across the table from her between two stout, pleasant, English ladies, one of whom was a friend of Lady Crail's, and had heard my praises sung by that most kindly and indulgent of good friends. I must confess that the Countess Samaroff made on this occasion, as well as on most others, a very striking and beautiful picture, and was a delight to see. She was again in tight, ivory satin—her favorite evening color—cut

to the waist line behind, and not far short of it before. She wore no stones at all, but a quantity of gold ornaments which were reproductions of ancient Greek and Roman jewelry—the sort of thing with which the Roman goldsmiths fill their shop-windows—and, on her head, a small wreath of thin-beaten gold leaves. I thought her hair looked a bit redder than when I had seen her last, and, by way of a further embellishment, she had stained the skin just under her eyes with a brownish tint, as nature does for dark people (Henry among them), but very seldom for blondes. Her mouth was so red that it looked like an open wound.

I watched to see how this very pictorial lady and the Bart. would get on together, and was very much pleased to see that they didn't get on at all. The Bart. was frankly sulky and scowled over his food until the Countess shrugged her handsome shoulders (to my great alarm—I was afraid she would shrug quite out of what little covering she had provided herself with) and turned to the man at her other side.

The English lady who knew Mary's mother saw me staring across the table and asked me what I thought of Olga Samaroff. I said, with due caution, that I thought her very handsome indeed, and uncommonly graceful—as graceful as a cat. The English lady laughed.

"Yes, she makes me think of a leopard—the leopard that *did* change its spots. At least, if Olga has any spots one certainly would know it to-night. She isn't concealing much—except the natural color of her hair."

Well, well, even nice, elderly ladies *will* say these things. There's a touch of leopard in them all, perhaps.

And then, I regret to state, my neighbor, who seemed, for some reason, a little bitter on the subject, started in to tear the golden lady, as it were, limb from limb, and performed

the horrid task with relish and thoroughness. She said the Russian was a bad lot, bad through and through, and made a specialty of young men, so I must be careful to keep out of her clutches. She mentioned a partial list of the victims, of only one of whom I had ever heard, and said she couldn't imagine how Samaroff, who was a decent enough being, at heart, could continue to face the world, knowing perfectly well that the world knew all about his wife's goings on.

Altogether, before that dinner was ended, I was thoroughly bored with Olga Samaroff and her badness and her victims and her husband and all that were hers, but I hadn't quite finished with her yet, for after dinner, and what the Bart. used to call "the restful, glad half-hour," she beckoned me across the drawing-room and made me sit down beside her.

"I have unusually good ears," she said, "and heard almost every word that elderly cat said to you at the table. What a dreadful person I appear to be, don't I?" I grinned and said that "dreadful" seemed a feeble word for it, and suggested either "dissolute" or "licentious." We finally chose "infamous" as the best of all.

But afterward, that important question settled, Mme. Samaroff leaned back a little, supporting herself by her two hands, and gazed reflectively upon me for some time in silence.

"It isn't my abandoned wickedness that puts you off me," she said at last. "You're not a prig. I'm wondering just what it is—just why you hate me so vindictively. I suppose it must be on account of Henry Trent." I said that sounded a very excellent reason, and she laughed, but turned grave again and stared at me once more.

"Thanks, anyhow, for so much frankness. I just wanted

to know. I like him, you see, and if I've got to fight for him I want to know whom I have to fight. There's you and Sir Augustus and, I suppose, your nice cousins — how many more, I wonder? Quite an army! Well, we shall see! Where is Henry Trent now, by-the-way? I don't mind confessing that I haven't seen him since I came back to Paris." I told her that Henry had gone home to America, and it was first blood to me, for the lady made a little exclamation under her breath and, for a moment, looked quite white and haggard. I was astonished and depressed, for there's no mistaking real feeling when you see it, and if Olga Samaroff was actually in earnest over Henry, not just luring him for amusement's sake, then Heaven help old Henry, said I.

I felt almost sorry for her but not quite, for there was my friend to think of.

"Ah, well," she said, presently, "he'll be back soon. You can't score off me so easily as all that. I know how he feels about Paris. Nothing could keep him away very long. You *did* give me a fright, though."

If I gave her a fright, as she half-humorously declared, I also made her cautious, for she dropped Henry at once and began to talk about me and my painting, of which, she was pleased to say, she had heard the most thrilling things. She asked, quite seriously, if I would paint her portrait (not a bad idea of hers, since it would bring her to the Rue d'Assas every day for a week or so!) I laughed in her face, and said I was immensely flattered, but too busy with other work (a plain lie). As a matter of fact I should, except for the inevitable complications, have been delighted to paint her, for she was, without exception, the most picturesque woman I have ever seen in my life. I should have done well with her, too, and sent the portrait

to the Salon and made a great furor with it; but that was one of the many pictures that never got painted—not by me, at any rate. And I don't regret it much, fine though it would have been.

We talked only a few moments more, for our hostess came up just then, and I had to be presented to another lady, who, oddly enough, also wanted her likeness painted. And this time I accepted and did a very decent piece of work, too. But Olga Samaroff's portrait would have been worth ten of it!

XVIII

HENRY returned shortly before mid-October. We should have liked to get up some kind of a jamboree by way of welcoming him back among us, with shawms and cymbals and Laplace and other joyous noises; but, in view of the sad errand which had taken him to America, thought that wouldn't be quite the thing, and so gave it up, and greeted him very quietly, as if he had only been away one night.

I wasn't at all pleased with his appearance. The sun and wind of the Atlantic had, if anything, deepened the healthy coat of tan that he had got during the summer, but I thought him quite noticeably thinner, and his eyes had taken on an entirely new expression, which I find I can't put into words except by saying that the eyes of people who have suffered a severe illness or a terrible grief often look like that. Henry had been through something within the past month which I could only wonder about and guess at, and, whatever it may have been, it had altered him greatly.

Was it his strangely divided love for Naïla and the "Introuvable" warring within him, and tormenting him, and rending him, heart and soul, during those long, solitary days and nights at sea? That was my guess, but I may have been wrong. At any rate, he wasn't the same, and everybody noticed it, from Naïla and the Bart. to Mme,

Salomon, who wanted to dose him with a tisane of her own concoction, and shed tears about him in an interview with me. She said he had "des yeux fatales," whatever that may have meant, and looked exactly like her son Benjamin after that poor youth had received his death-warning with tuberculosis of the lungs.

"Des yeux fatales!" The phrase stuck in my mind for many a long day, and wouldn't be got rid of. It gave me shivers in the night sometimes.

I think Henry was quite conscious of this new state of malaise; in fact, I'm sure of it, and it was almost pathetic to see his efforts to shake it off when with me or with the Bart., or with my cousins, or any of his friends at all. And, in the course of these painstaking efforts, he was so winning and tender and sympathetic and considerate of other people's feelings or prejudices or points of view, and so jolly and even, at times, witty and gay, that we loved him twice as hard as we'd ever loved him before, and could have wept over him, and longed terribly to find some cure for his sad condition—but that, of course, was beyond us: we could only wait and mourn and leave it to time and hope for the best.

I well remember his first meeting with Naïla after his return (it took place in the garden on one of the last warm afternoons of the autumn). Naïla had made me promise not to leave them alone together, and so I sat unhappily by. My cousin was, I know, very nervous in spite of the "readiness" she had boasted of, and not quite herself, but Henry played his part of affectionate elder brother with a grace and sweetness and charm and semblance of naturalness to have wrung cheers from me, if I hadn't been so miserable over him. And after a little while Naïla's ner-

vous embarrassment wore gradually off, and she became quite light-hearted and intimate and witty and gay. So the hour passed safely enough, and seemed to presage a not very difficult return to the old comfortable relationship. I seem to remember that Marian wasn't there, and so, when it was that she and Henry met again, I don't know. I should think it must have been on the next day.

But later that afternoon I came upon Henry sitting in the studio in the dusk with his head in his hands. I had to speak twice before I got his attention. Then he looked up at me and shook his head. His face was all drawn and wan and bitter.

"It's no good, Bill," said poor old Henry. "I can't do it. I thought I could. This last month I've been trying to—get a point of view . . . understand things . . . come to terms. . . . It wasn't easy, you know, but I thought I'd done it. I was quite sure."

He waved his arms.

"All gone. . . . The moment I saw her and heard her voice and . . . touched her . . . all gone!

"I just can't go on with it, that's flat."

I tried to argue with him, but Henry was in no condition for argument. He was badly shaken up and in a dreadful state of mind. I confess I was at my wits' end. He kept saying that he mustn't ever be alone with Naïla again, and tried to make me promise I'd see that he wasn't. And he made wild threats of leaving Paris forever—going to the country or to London or to Germany. Then he would remember why he must be in Paris and groan and begin all over again.

There's no good in going over that scene in detail here. It was, for the most part, something like hysteria on Henry's

part, and weak and quite unavailing attempts on mine to cheer him up. I couldn't cheer him at all, and neither could the Bart., who came in presently. But after a time we got him to bed, quite hot and weak and feverish, and I gave him a sedative powder—sulphonal or trional or something of the sort—that the Bart., who suffered at intervals from insomnia, happened to have left in the studio. So after an hour or so he fell asleep, and the Bart. and I went off very sadly to dinner, which, for once, we couldn't even pretend to enjoy. We talked about old Henry and wondered what would come out of all this distressing tangle, and got so worked up about it that we almost needed sedative powders ourselves that night.

Worse was to come still, for the next morning, in a shop somewhere across the river, Henry happened upon the Countess Samaroff and they went and had lunch together.

It couldn't have happened at a more unfortunate time if the devil himself had had it all in charge (and maybe he had). Henry, in his desperate mood, must have been about the easiest victim that yellow-haired lady had ever scooped into her net. How she must have gloated over him!—and how she must have laughed at me if I ever came into her mind!

So, by a chance meeting at just the wrong moment, began an episode in Henry Trent's life that I would gladly forget if I could, and gladly would omit altogether from these pages if I hadn't set out to tell the plain truth about him and all the truth I know. It is an episode that reflects no credit upon anybody involved (except, perhaps, rather surprisingly, upon Count Samaroff). It was, from first to last, just low and belittling and mean and contemptible, and the only

good thing about it was that it didn't last long—about a fortnight altogether.

Henry's part in it will have been already as clear to you as it has ever been to me (and that's not very clear). One must, I take it, conceive him as in the position of a desperate man who takes to drink or drugs or the vulgarest dissipation in a quite mad attempt to stifle pain. That he never cared a tinker's damn for the Countess Samaroff I am as sure as that I have ten toes—cared seriously, that is. But she seems to have made, from the very beginning, a certain cheap appeal to his senses, and strengthened this by flattering him up and giving him the idea that she "understood" him. (Heaven save the mark!) Further, she was a very clever woman and undeniably beautiful and possessed (if my elderly English lady was to be believed) great sophistication. Further still, this sophistication was pitted against what I believe to have been, on Henry's part, complete innocence—in a certain narrow and rather technical meaning of the word. To the best of my knowledge Henry had never had any of those furtive (or open) "experiences" with which so many young men manage to provide themselves and look knowing over and boast about. He wasn't in the least priggish or goody-goody, but that side of life just hadn't come his way. He'd been too busy for it. So Olga Samaroff with ridiculous ease wove her spell round about poor Henry and, but for the merest accident, would, I verily believe, have wrecked him altogether.

There is a touch of pathos in the fact that at the last she was undone by a bit of genuine emotion on her own part.

Meanwhile you mustn't think that we others sat tamely by and watched old Henry making a fool of himself without lifting a finger to help him. Both the Bart. and I talked to

him like Dutch uncles (those stern and choleric souls!). I don't know how the Bart. made out, but I very well remember that Henry and I came uncomfortably near a serious quarrel, for I minced no words with him and told him that he was disgracing himself and his friends, and insulting Naïla—not to mention Some One Else to whom he had been pretending to dedicate his life—and playing fast and loose with another man's wife—everything, in fact, but robbing a bank. I might as well have delivered an address in Hindustani for all Henry cared! He was, for the time being, practically insane.

Naïla was at first grief-stricken, then openly outraged and furious with plain jealousy and wouldn't see Henry or speak to him. I shudder to think of the names she called that yellow-headed enchantress of the Square de la Tour Maubourg—and Henry too, for that matter. It did my heart good to see so much spirit in her.

Marian remained apart with hard and gloomy eyes and said never a word.

I remember that once Henry and I, returning at noon from Julian's (for he kept up his morning work there in a half-hearted fashion), met my cousins in the street. They bowed and smiled to me but cut Henry dead, and I think that cut hurt him more than all the Bart.'s and my lecturings had done—all our reproaches and hard names.

Then, at the end of a fortnight, during which he had scarcely been at home at all, except to sleep, Henry came in one late afternoon and found me smoking morosely in a corner. He was pale and tight-lipped and looked upset. He said, without preamble:

"I may have need of you, Bill, and the Bart. to stand by me in an affair and—do the usual things. If you don't care

to serve I dare say I could find a couple of fellows at Julian's. How about it?" He spoke in quite a stiff, starchy tone, but I could see, easily enough, that he was in a great state of agitation. I got up and took him by the arms, making him face me fair, and said:

"Now, then, chuck all that! Come out with it! What's the row?" And poor Henry quite wilted and said:

"Oh, damn it, Bill! the whole rotten thing has got into the most awful mess. I might have known it would. I *have* been an ass, and don't deserve to be forgiven by anybody, ever again, or spoken to decently, or stood up for. I might have known how it would end. Samaroff's coming here—the bristly little rat!—or sending his seconds, more likely. You and the Bart. will have to act for me and make the proper sort of arrangements—any kind of arrangements you like. *I* don't care. I only hope Samaroff will kill me. I deserve it. You'd better choose pistols and give him a chance."

I made Henry sit down beside me on one of the divans and in a very few minutes had the whole wretched story out of him. He told it with some difficulty and not a little sheepishness and shame, but the starch had gone out of him for good and he was quite ready to confess himself all the kinds of fool that there are—and perhaps one or two more, par dessus le marché.

It seems he had been with his Circe on this afternoon, and, apropos of I don't know just what, some kind of a vaguely sketched "scene" had taken place, in the course of which the lady had lost first her temper, then her head and, last, about all the self-control she had ever possessed. She seems to have wept and wailed and reproached Henry bitterly for a frozen statue of a man entirely sans in'ards, and screamed

and carried on in a very high tone of voice, and threatened to kill herself, and clung round Henry's neck, begging him, in good, old, melodramatic style, to fly with her (I know not where, but, I suppose, to some bourne where bristly husbands are not). And then, just at the height of this thrilling, if somewhat ridiculous, scene, with the lady draped round Henry's neck, and Henry—somewhat red in the face, much perturbed and very uncomfortable—trying his best to disentangle himself, enters Count Samaroff from the doorway where he has been listening!

Tableau! as the play-books say.

"I wanted to die!" said poor Henry, squirming miserably beside me. "I wanted to lie down on the floor and die then and there."

But that supreme climax had been denied him and he was forced to remain in the room for some unhappy minutes longer, while Count Samaroff stood with his arms folded, à la Napoleon I^ier^, and the lady, fairly afloat now upon seas of hysteria, berated them both in language which seems to have been the most dreadful shock and disillusionment of the whole affair to my fastidious friend.

"I didn't know there *were* such words!" said Henry. "And to hear them from *her*, of all people!"

In the end, with what dignity he could scrape up, he made a ceremonious bow to Count Samaroff, said that he would remain at home for twenty-four hours to receive any communications that M. le Comte might care to make, they bowed again with great solemnity, and Henry got away, pursued down the stairs by screams and imprecations from the lady, who hadn't stopped an instant all the while—not even to take breath.

And the odd, but, perhaps, not altogether unnatural, part

of it all was that my friend didn't seem to care a fig what might be in store for him at the hands of the avenging husband; it was the sight and sound of Olga Samaroff transformed into a blaspheming fury that filled him to the brim with shame and humiliation and remorse and all sorts of wholesome sentiments. He was aghast at the awful memory of her.

My thoughts, however, were, as you may well believe, upon the immediate future. There wasn't a doubt that Henry would have to fight—and to fight a man who considered himself very deeply wronged indeed and would be in deadly earnest. Of course the Bart. and I would have to be seconds, and I didn't mean to listen to any nonsense about pistols. Henry was one of the best swordsmen in Paris, and I meant him to have a chance. With a pistol he couldn't have hit the Panthéon from the topmost step of its porch.

I went to call the Bart. from below, but, half-way to the door, came back and halted Henry, who was walking up and down the room trying to light a cigarette. I said:

"Look here! I want to ask you one question. Just how much of a right has Count Samaroff got to consider himself injured?" At first he didn't understand me at all, but when he did I thought I should have to fight him then and there. He was furious, and wanted to know what the devil kind of a cad I thought he was. But then he sat down again with his head in his hands, and almost wept, and apologized for seeming to have any pride left in him. He said he had given us all every reason to think he was quite too low to speak to, and he shouldn't blame us if we chose to turn him out altogether.

I laughed and went to call the Bart.

Henry had told Count Samaroff that he would be at home

for twenty-four hours, so we didn't dare go out for dinner at a restaurant, but had something brought into the studio instead. It would have been a pretty gloomy meal, I fancy, but for Henry's efforts, who, sick and disgusted and ashamed though he was of the whole wretched affair, seemed to feel it necessary to keep our spirits up, and so talked along at a most unusual pace, for him, and cracked little jokes, and was so droll and merry that we had to laugh whether we would or not.

He went to bed shortly after ten o'clock, saying that he was drowsy. I thought this sheer bravado, and, somewhat later, looked in on him. He was sleeping like a baby, curled up in a ball with his cheek on one hand! But there was no sleep for me that night—and none for the Bart., either. I confess frankly we were in a blue funk. What might not the next day or two bring forth! What, indeed! A miserable death in a mean cause to the dearest friend we had in the world. I think we'd neither of us ever before realized how dear he was, how he had become a necessary part of our lives. Not even his absence, shortly before, had made us feel that as keenly as we felt it now. The peril he was in couldn't even be spoken of. We talked round and round it, sitting, with our pipes, in the candle-light. We tried to pretend it wasn't there, but it was. It lay between us like a corpse on a bier.

What an end to Henry Trent's towering hopes and titanic endeavors! What a close to as clean and chaste and pure-hearted and devoted a life as ever was lived in this world!

We got on each other's nerves, the Bart. and I did, smoking together there through the night, with our solemn faces, and our labored talk, and our careful, painstaking avoidance of the thing we were so in dread of. But we stayed on, for

all that, knowing, I fancy, that there was no such thing as sleep for either of us. And somehow the long night wore to its close and the studio top-light got pallid gray, and the dawn came. Then we had a bath and a change, and went out to the Café du Dôme for breakfast. Henry was still sleeping like a tired navvy.

I remember that it was toward eleven o'clock when the door-bell rang. The three of us, idling about in the studio, jumped as if the bell had hit us a mortal blow, and, for my part, I'm quite sure I turned pale. The Bart. went to the door, and it was Count Samaroff, who bowed stiffly and asked for M. Trent. The Bart. let him in and I went forward to greet him. All three of us, the Bart., Samaroff, and I, bowed. I suggested that his errand might possibly be with M. Trent's friends, and that we were at his service. I wondered why he had come in person. But the Russian bowed for the third time and said he should like to speak with Henry alone. He must have guessed what my sharp look meant, for he smiled a little, holding out his hands, which were empty but for stick and gloves.

"You need have no fear, Monsieur," said he. "I am not armed. I have come to speak, not to act." So, with regret and not a little dread, the Bart. and I went down-stairs to the lower studio, leaving Henry and his visitor together. We sat on the model-stand surrounded by sheeted ghosts (the Bart.'s clay sketches, which were covered by damp cloths) and smoked many cigarettes in deep gloom and wondered what the deuce it all meant. The Bart., who was a great stickler for the proprieties, said this personal interview between principals was most irregular and scandalous and not done in respectable duelling circles, and that he

wished me to understand he countenanced it only under protest. What was the world coming to? he'd like to know.

In exactly half an hour we heard feet upon the outer stair, retreating steps upon the brick path through the garden, and, after a bit, Henry came down to us, looking rather red, and white about the lips, and as sheepish as if he had been stealing jam and had got caught at it.

There wasn't to be any duel at all!

M. Samaroff, we gathered, had talked to him like a father (and not like a Dutch uncle). He gave us no details of the conversation that had taken place between them, but we gathered that the Russian had behaved with dignity and forbearance and calm (and I think I may add, on my own account, a doubtless thorough knowledge of his wife's character). At any rate, Henry came from that surprising interview a wiser and a humbler man and one very unlikely again to involve himself in any mean imbroglio with yellow-haired enchantresses.

The Bart. and I were noisily jubilant and wanted to have a great celebration of this happy dénoûment, but Henry was in no frame of mind for celebrations. Sackcloth and ashes were more in his line just then. He went back up-stairs and shut himself in his own room, and we didn't see him again until evening.

So ended a very deplorable episode, and I am glad to have done with it forever. It might have closed so differently!

I have said that the only good thing about it was its brevity. On second thought I'm not so sure. Perhaps it had its value in Henry's life after all, as disagreeable things often do have. Perhaps the very bitterness of his shame and remorse drove him the more quickly and surely to take up his final task. For, within the next week, he at length

set to work upon the first of those five great canvases—so swiftly to be followed by the four others,—and with that this rambling history begins to draw toward its climax.

We've momentous matters before us now, and there mustn't be much tarrying by the wayside.

We must get on.

XIX

IT must have been, I think, early in November that Henry began the "Introuvable" no. 1. Whether at that time he had any idea of following it up so closely with its four sisters, I don't know. He may not have looked ahead at all. I am sure only that he realized his time had come. He gave up his work at Julian's and his copying at the Louvre and hid himself from sight like an animal in travail. He hung curtains upon copper wires round that part of the big studio which had always been his and did his work there behind them—alone. We knew, of course, what Henry was doing, but we never saw those five great canvases until all of them were completed. Not even the femme de ménage, going about her daily sweeping and scrubbing, ever saw them, for, when Henry was not at work, a cloth hung down over the face of the canvas on the easel and covered it.

I am rather at a loss, even now, to account for this strange secrecy: it doesn't seem at all like Henry's way, but secret he was at that time, and doubtless had his obscure reasons for it.

All through the winter—for four months indeed, November, December, January, and February—we saw very little of him. By day he was at work, hidden from view behind his curtains—or, if the work didn't go well, he'd be out in the streets taking long solitary tramps and declining company on them. Oftener than not he dined alone—I never knew where—and usually went to bed early.

And how he gave himself up to toil! Those five incomparable masterpieces didn't paint themselves by any manner of means. They came into the world through a perfect fury of labor and pain and anguish—a veritable travail. It told upon Henry dreadfully. He got so thin and white and hollow-eyed that I was frightened for him, and, after the first few weeks, begged him, for all our sakes, to have a care. But Henry said, rather impatiently, that he was well enough and felt as strong as a horse, and, anyhow, meant to take a holiday presently. But he didn't.

The Bart. and I were genuinely distressed over him and watched him with anxious eyes and made all manner of plans for luring him away from his task and getting some color back into his white cheeks once more, but I think we knew it wouldn't be any good to try. Henry was beyond our reach in those days. So, gradually and, to ourselves, imperceptibly, we began to do without him in our various activities, and, by mid-winter, had so adjusted our lives that old Henry had scarcely any part in them at all—a sort of silent preoccupied ghost, flitting in and out of the place, who didn't want to talk much nor to be asked to join parties or expeditions, and was better pleased if he wasn't even spoken to. We adjusted ourselves to all this as best we could. But it wasn't the same.

We often sighed and shook our heads over it.

I had patched up a sort of peace between Henry and Naïla, but it wasn't much good, for, nowadays, Naïla saw no more of him than the Bart. and I did—even less. After the lucky dénoûment of the wretched Samaroff affair I went to Naïla, in the Avénue de l'Observatoire, and told her she had got to forgive him, for he had been much more foolish than faithless, and was heartily sorry and ashamed

and deeply depressed, and there wasn't the least possibility of anything like that happening again. I couldn't tell her what it was that had driven him in such desperation into Olga Samaroff's clutches, but I invented a reason that sounded (to me at least) convincing enough. Anyhow, my cousin seemed to be convinced by it and forgave Henry at once, and wept and hoped he would forgive her, in turn, for cutting him that day in the street—which she said (and I believe it) was the meanest and lowest thing she had ever done in her life. Of course she was depressed and saddened by his neglect of her once he had begun work on the pictures, but she saw that he removed himself from all of us equally, and that was some comfort. Besides, she hoped, as the Bart. and I did also, that this phase of affairs would soon come to an end, and Henry return to himself. None of us had the least idea that he would be four months about it.

We should have been frightened out of our wits.

So we went about our busy daily life, as best we could, in what we began to term "Henry's absence," and worked and played very much as we had done the winter before—but with a difference. Once more the restaurants in the Boulevard St. Michel, or the Place de Rennes, or the grands boulevards knew the Bart. and Jimmy Fordyce and me; once more the Opéra or the theatres or the Folies Bergères or much humbler houses of entertainment sheltered and amused us of an evening; once more we breathed stale tobacco smoke and listened, entranced, to lovely music at the Concerts Rouge in the Rue de Tournon; and once more, when these pleasures palled, the old circle of combatants met after dinner across a marble-topped café-table and wrangled over great questions of art or finance or government or religion—and settled them then and there for all time!

The Bart. had finished his portrait-busts and was setting up another large figure—King Lear out in the cold and storm—which he meant to have cast in bronze and to send to the Salon in the spring. I painted one portrait, in November (it wasn't very successful, but the lady liked it), and to my great delight had orders for two more and a sort of family group—the Comtesse de Saulnes, a charming young Englishwoman at whose house the Bart. and I sometimes dined, together with her two young children; and into this I meant to put, as Mary would have said, my "best licks," for it offered fascinating opportunities in composition, etc.—a far more interesting problem than any single figure. And if you should feel inclined to wonder why it was that an unknown young man, a mere student at Julian's, a mere beginner in his craft, should find himself so beset with orders upon orders for portraits (a most extraordinary and dream-like state of affairs), I can only bow, with my hand on my heart, and say that I wonder too, even more than you do, and can offer no explanation whatever except the one which is probably true—that I had good friends in influential places. I dare say the greater number of these flattering commissions might be found—if you looked—to have had their inspiration from that best and kindliest and faithfulest of women, the Countess of Crail.

But as I look backward upon this epoch it isn't my portrait-painting that stands out in sharp and rosy and golden relief (though it got itself done, and was done seriously and honestly and by no means scamped!)—it is the visit that Mary Borrow paid to my cousins, the Castles, and, somewhat later, the long-promised but hardly hoped-for arrival in Paris of my Uncle George.

XX

MARY turned up late in November, as beautiful as the sunshine, and entirely surrounded by trunks and hat-boxes. Her mother, poor lady! was far from well, with a troublesome affection of the throat, and had gone to visit friends in Algiers. So there wasn't to be any Christmas party at Shotland, and Mary meant to stay on through that cheerful season in Paris unless we got tired of her and put her out.

We didn't, and she stayed well into January.

Her visit was a veritable God-send to little Naïla (to say nothing of the rest of us), for my poor cousin had worried herself half ill, first over Henry's Samaroff affair—which hurt her cruelly—and then over his complete retirement from the world—even though she understood the reason for it, and, on the theoretical side, approved. Theory was all very well, but it couldn't bring Henry back to her, and she had fallen into the deepest gloom and her health was beginning to suffer. Also, I think, the sympathy and understanding between her and Marian had been, of late, a little less perfect, and I think Naïla grieved over that. She gave me some hint of it once in a talk we had. But Mary Borrow's lovely and loving and sympathetic and exuberant presence acted like some magical tonic, and we soon had Naïla laughing again and going on shopping-tours, and even dining out at quiet restaurants and attending the Opéra—in

a loge where she would be more or less hidden, for she was still very sensitive about the ugly goggles, and impatient for the day to come on which she might take them off and grind them to powder under her heel.

As for me! . . . I sha'n't even try to describe the hectic state of joy, by turns tremulous and exultant, in which I passed these golden weeks—the soul-satisfying thrill with which I awoke each morning and realized that there was another wonderful day in store for me, with Mary in it—and any quantity of days ahead! There are no words for a state of mind like that—or if there are *I* haven't them. And Heaven knows I've searched the dictionaries.

She was very kind and sweet and charming to me, though that isn't to say she'd completely changed her spots (like the leopard and Olga Samaroff), for she could still blow hot and cold, lure you on one day and laugh in your face the next. She couldn't help playing the eternal game of womankind. It was her nature to (as the Bart. would say). And, to tell the truth, you didn't want her to help it, even though there were times when *I*, for one, would gladly have beaten her with the first stick that came to hand.

I told her so long afterward and Mary said: "Well, why didn't you? It would have done me good."

Oddly enough, she was the only one of us all who got anywhere near Henry at this time. (Not that that was very near.) He seemed to like being with Mary, and quite often they went for long walks together. I complained to her more than once about this rank favoritism, and said I was going to tell Henry what I thought of him. But Mary said:

"Let him alone, dear Bill! He isn't himself. He's in the most frightfully wrought-up state. He hardly knows at all what he's saying or doing." And she told me that on

these long walks of theirs Henry often wouldn't speak for half an hour at a time, but wanted to walk very fast and get very tired. He seemed to feel her presence there beside him and to be glad of it and to take an odd sort of comfort in it, but he didn't want conversation.

"It's like somebody in terrible grief," Mary said, "who's glad to have you there, close by, but doesn't want to be talked to. You know, I think he shies off you and the Bart. because you try too much to entertain him, and cheer him up, and rest his mind. He doesn't *want* his mind rested. He doesn't want it touched at all. So I just tramp about with Henry, and keep my mouth shut, and wait for him to speak. That's all there is of it."

Of course after that I couldn't feel disposed to complain any longer. Heaven knows I was glad of anything that would bring comfort or solace to poor Henry, since I seemed to be quite powerless to help him myself.

My Uncle George arrived at mid-December and was made as welcome as if he'd been the spring-time or an unlooked-for legacy. I found him a little grayer and, perhaps, a shade less exuberant, but otherwise unaltered—as quaint and charming and sweet-natured and philosophical and young in mind and courtly in manner as ever before. And he fitted in among us as if he had always been there, and everybody adored him, especially the Bart., who was quite angry to think that he had lived all these years without knowing that prince of gentlemen. I might have foreseen how close in sympathy these two would find themselves, but I didn't, and was, of course, very much pleased. They became like brothers.

My Uncle George hadn't expected to find Mary Borrow in Paris, and was quite overcome by her splendid and mag-

netic beauty. He made her the most lovely and overpowering compliments culled from Latin poets; they were lost on Mary until I translated, later on, but she gathered that pretty speeches were being made to her, and made pretty speeches back again (in English) and insisted upon being kissed upon each rosy cheek, at which my uncle nearly wept with pleasure.

He was charmed, also, with the quieter loveliness of Naïla Castle—whom he remembered very well from five or six years back—and completely enraptured by her singing; but I think he was less pleased by the silent and brooding Marian. She wasn't at all the type to win my Uncle George.

Over Henry, of whom he had been very fond in years gone by, he was greatly distressed. As you might well guess, Henry's lifelong fidelity to an ideal found in him the deepest sympathy and admiration, but my uncle was the simplest and most wholesome of all souls, and the mysterious side of poor Henry's career was a little beyond him—it made him uncomfortable and uneasy and frightened him a little. He wasn't happy with mysteries. Henry's obsession appeared to him in the unequivocal light of a dangerous malady, which view of the case my friend's sadly altered appearance and haunted eyes and avoidance of companionship so strengthened that he was all for insisting upon a consultation of doctors, and cablegrams to far-away Mrs. Trent, and various other radical reforms. I actually had to argue with him for hours to convince him that nothing could be done beyond waiting and hoping and leaving it all to time.

First and last a good deal was made of my Uncle George during his visit. He had several old friends in Paris, men high in official or diplomatic or social life, who entertained him royally; and the Bart. and I took him to several houses

where we knew his charming qualities would find a ready welcome; and I introduced him to the good M. Constant, who gave him a dinner-party with a quite staggering list of guests. But, though all this touched and delighted him, his tastes were unaffectedly simple, and I think he was happiest when he was made an honored member of our intimate little circle and sat with us in the studio, of an evening, while Naïla and the Magyar pianist made lovely music, or lunched or dined with us in the restaurants of the Quarter, or took a quiet, smiling, tolerant part in those after-dinner café-table courts-martial when the great questions of Life were arraigned and squabbled over and sentenced—and perhaps executed then and there.

We had once more fallen into our old habit of gathering, two or three evenings a week, in the studio for music and general entertainment. At first I was afraid Henry mightn't like it, for he often went to bed early and, even if he didn't, was in no mind for entertaining. With some hesitation I spoke to him about it, and Henry was quite hurt to think I should find it necessary to ask. He said that if he had become such a wet blanket, such a kill-joy as that, he'd better retire quite literally from the world and bury himself somewhere in the country. He said:

"I know I'm behaving like a sick bear, old Bill, and I'm no end sorry about it. Apparently it can't be helped, but that's no reason why I should be a public nuisance. For Heaven's sake, just you go on doing whatever you'd like to do, and don't consider me at all. . . . Good Lord! it never once occurred to me that I was upsetting the whole show like this. It never once occurred to me. Have 'em all here in the evening as much as you choose! I shall like it, truly. And if I don't talk much or laugh very hard and if I go to

bed or take a walk in the middle of things, just try not to notice. I'm not responsible for myself these days. Pity the sorrows of a poor maniac, and don't make him worse off still by feeling himself in the way!" He said a great deal more in the same strain and seemed so much in earnest about it, and threatened so convincingly to leave Paris altogether that I at last took him at his word, and the studio in the garden became once more quite gay and jolly, after the lamps were lit—quite like its old self.

Henry was often to be seen there with us, a silent presence hovering upon the edge of the circle. He nodded his head with pleasure when the little Hungarian played, and looked solemn when Naïla sang—or sat very still in a dark corner with his face hidden; and once when she had finished Solveig's great song from the *Peer Gynt* suite, I, who chanced to be near him, saw that he was trembling violently all over and that there were tears on his cheeks—they shone wet in the lamplight. So my cousin's voice still had for him its old enchantment. But she never, nowadays, sang "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix."

The little Magyar had invented a new form of musical art, but had neither the money nor the influence to develop it. It was to be the music of the future, he said, and perhaps he was right, but that future has not yet arrived. I wonder if it ever will come. A friend took him one day to the Folies Bergères—or, perhaps it was Olympia, I'm not quite sure—and there, for the first time in his life, he saw photographic moving-pictures projected upon a screen, and was much interested by them. His Great Idea flashed upon him, he said, on the very spot.

Why not adapt moving-pictures to descriptive music?

He delivered an excited harangue to all of us in the studio

the next evening. Descriptive music had always been, he declared, with some justice, a haphazard and primitive and imperfect form of art. A man wrote an orchestral score and called it "The Storm." If you didn't look at your programme to make sure, it might represent to you almost anything violent—a storm—a battle—an intoxicated gentleman coming home and beating his wife.

How magnificent, on the other hand, a series of moving-pictures of that storm, accompanied by the same storm music! Or, suppose it wasn't a tempest at all! Suppose it to be a lovely summer landscape in the afternoon, with golden sunlight, and cloud shadows trailing across the hills, and a river flashing between the meadows, and tall rows of trees, and flowery fields, and birds wheeling overhead. Or, suppose it to be a stern and rock-bound coast, or a shipwreck, or a battle, or two lovers spooning in the moonlight—anything at all! Here was a new form of art—two arts combined—to represent it and make it beautiful. Here was opera without human voices—without human beings, if you chose—without any form of life at all, save the living, breathing face of Mother Nature.

The little Hungarian was tremendously wrought up over his Great Idea, and quivered, and waved his arms, and had tears in his eyes, and all but choked with emotion as he ventured farther and farther into its infinite possibilities. He thrilled us, too. We couldn't see why he hadn't hit upon something very original and epoch-making. We shook his hands and clapped him on the back and congratulated him and drank his health until he quite forgot his natural timidity (he was the humblest of all beings) and swaggered about the studio like Herr Richard Wagner come back to earth.

So our poor little friend had at least one evening of triumph

in his wretched half-starved existence, and was made much of, and went home with his head in the clouds and knew, for a few brief hours, all the rapture of unrivalled success. But though my cousins and the Bart. and Fordyce and I all did what we could toward bringing him into contact with musical people of influence, I am afraid the Great Idea went begging and never even got a trial—at least I never heard that it got one—so the music of the future remains still in that veiled, unexplored region. It would be pleasant to think that some courageous soul who reads these words might be fired by them, and give The Idea a serious trial.

Its discoverer, alas! is lost to my ken. I wonder where he may be to-day, and if he's still dreaming his great dream. He's dreaming it if he still lives. I'll swear to that.

We had the pleasantest of all Christmas-tides—a whole series of celebrations, little and big. Even Henry came from out his hermit's cave to join in them and had, I believe, as good a time as anybody. Across the years I look back upon that Christmas season of 1898 with a sad and peculiar pleasure—between a smile and a tear. I treasure it more than any words can convey, for it was the only one of its kind. The year before, you will remember, I was in England, and the year after . . . What momentous changes had occurred! . . . How widely scattered was that happy little circle! . . . what gaps, never again to be filled, had come among us! Alas and alas!

It was the only Christmas-tide we ever had all together. I wonder if some shadowy, ghostly warning didn't come, unrealized, into the dim recesses of our minds, to tell us that there would never be its like. As I look back, we seem to

have declared so very often, in well-nigh defiant tones, that it should be but the first of many.

For the Midnight Mass we went, I know, across the river to St. Eustache, for the music there was famous (I suppose it still is, but I don't know), and the deep impression it made upon me is fresh still in my mind.

I have but to shut my eyes . . .

It would give me real pleasure to attempt to make a sort of word-picture of that memorable scene as we saw it so long ago, but I haven't the courage (nor you, I am sure, the patience). It has been too often and too well done before me. The Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is always the same—the straining, pushing throng of silent people; the heat; the smell of incense; the lighted, smoky arches of the great church; the echoing blare of the organ; the voices of celebrant priests intoning and the responses by the choir; the tinkling of little bells at the altars; the long wait while more altar-bells tinkle and boys' voices sing short, sharp cadences; then the gathering hush as the hour draws near its close, and at last the organ crashes, and a great baritone voice, far away among the columns and the white clouds of incense smoke, begins triumphantly to sing Adam's "Noël," and Christ is born and it's Christmas Day.

That is all my conscience will allow me to say of this already too familiar and hackneyed scene—a mere hint, a suggestion—a few notes of the "Adeste Fidelis" or the "Noël." But the scene itself was by no means stale or hackneyed to me—nor, indeed, to any of us. It moved us deeply, even the cynical Fordyce. And as for Henry, when at last the organ pealed out and that great baritone voice began to sing:

"Minuit Chrétiens, c'est l'heure solennelle!" he was almost overcome and covered his face with his hands. Naïla

moved up close to him, sitting on the altar-steps of a little chapel, and Henry put down one hand and held hers very hard in it. I saw, but I think nobody else did—except perhaps Marian, who always saw everything.

I saw one more thing, too. As the throng began to sweep back past our retreat I saw Olga Samaroff's face appear in it quite suddenly like a drowned face tossed among the waves of a sea. It was very pale and quite expressionless! She faced us for no more than a single long instant, but it was long enough. Her eyes and Henry's met, and I heard him give a sort of low, whispering cry. Then she was gone, and it was the last time but one that I ever saw her. I wonder if Count Samaroff was with her that night in St. Eustache. I suppose he was, but I don't know.

We waited until the thickest of the press was gone and then made our own way out, and, for the second time that night, I had the pleasure of saving Mary Borrow from being squeezed to death in the crowd by the might of my brawny arms, which I held in a loose circle round her. Henry and my Uncle George likewise shielded Naïla, and the Bart. and Fordyce cared for Marian.

I remember that once Mary smiled up at me over her shoulder, saying:

"How nice to be a Hercules, Bill! Not a soul has so much as touched me." Whereupon I became twice as mighty as before—a veritable tower of strength, a fortress, a sort of swaggering, swashbuckling bully, and the astounded populace gave way before me like grain before the reaper.

Oddly enough, I don't remember where we went afterward for the Réveillon, but I know it was somewhere in the grands boulevards not too far from the Opéra, where we

had engaged a table beforehand, and I remember that we ate bouillabaisse, in good traditional fashion, and that it made poor Naïla ill, but not very ill.

On the next evening, the evening of Christmas Day, we went to a big suscription fancy-dress ball at the Académie Vitti in the Boulevard Montparnasse. We had originally meant to have a soirée of our own in the studio, but we found that all of our intended guests were going to the ball, and Mary Borrow was clamorous to go, so we changed our plans, and bought or hired or made costumes, and had a most amusing time.

You should have seen us! Naïla went as Nydia, the blind girl, in "The Last Days of Pompeii," with a veil over her eyes, and her hair done in the classic Greek style, and a simple white garment fastened with brooches over her slim shoulders and hanging in thin, straight folds to her sandalled feet. She looked very pretty indeed, and was much admired, especially by my Uncle George. Marian went as Zenobia—a quite splendid and striking figure, and a great surprise to us all. Henry, who would have liked to stop quietly at home, but wasn't allowed to, went as a fifteenth-century Italian gallant in wig and hose and a brocaded cloak, and stuck unhappily by Naïla's side through the entire evening. He hated himself in his strange clothes. He said he felt like a cat in papers. Fordyce went as Beau Brummel, and my Uncle George, who voted himself too old for dressing up, went as himself.

Mary Borrow had vacillated among any number of alluring costumes, quite unable to choose from their number. She finally appealed to me, and I said:

"Oh, put a crescent in your hair, and sew a couple of sheets together! I'll find you the bow and arrows." She

was enchanted and jumped up and down like a child (Mary in Blandford!). She said:

"Bill, you're a darling! Do you *really* think I could?" and patted me on both cheeks. I said I thought she could, and she did. Heavens, I should think so! Mary Borrow as Diana the maiden huntress was the most divinely and intoxicatingly and overpoweringly beautiful vision I ever saw in my life, or ever hope to see. It made me weak in the knees to see her. It made my head spin round—and many another head, as well, that winter's night.

My Uncle George, as you might well expect, said:

"'Vera incessu patuit dea.'" And never were truer words spoken—but at that they fell so far short of the mark.

I forgot to say that Fordyce lent her, for the occasion, his big Russian wolf-hound, Vladimir, who stalked at her sandalled heels and couldn't be enticed away.

I was misled into rigging myself up as Achilles, in a plumed gilt helmet and a shield and a spear and not much else. I remember that my legs got cold, and that various humorously inclined friends held their fingers before their faces and pretended to be shocked and wanted to lend me part of their clothes. But Mary said I was too lovely for words, and that was some comfort.

We found a number of acquaintances at Vitti's—Meunier as Henri IV.; Laplace as the devil in red tights and his beard waxed into a fork; the little Hungarian in a monk's cowl; Ames and McNaughten in I don't remember what; Jellaby in the rusty black of Louis XI.; M. Anatole Cuvier, to my surprise and pleasure, as Dante; and last, but by no means least, the flat German girl in a thirteenth-century dress of thin cloth of gold, with her hair down in two big plaits and her eyes made up to look twice their size and her

cheeks and lips rouged. Where she had got such a gorgeous costume I can't imagine, but I well remember that she made, probably for the first time in her life, a truly beautiful and splendid figure, and attracted no end of attention. The good M. Anatole got very much excited about her and made me present him, and, after that, never left the German girl's side for the rest of the evening.

Indeed, it gives me the keenest pleasure to add here, lest I forget it later on, that this auspiciously begun little affair by no means ended with the close of the fancy-dress ball at Vitti's. It went happily on for many a day afterward, though, I presume, without the aid of the cloth-of-gold dress. I used to hear of it from Naïla, who had it direct from the German girl, who was quite tremulous with joy and pride and exaltation. Naïla told me that love had made her almost pretty. I came upon her one morning among the bare-limbed trees of the Luxembourg Gardens, sitting on a stool and painting bravely despite the chill air. But alas! love hadn't made the trees any less blue!

It wasn't to be expected that those genial ruffians, Laplace and Meunier, should get through an entire evening without accomplishing something riotous. They fell by chance upon the little Magyar, and got him to tell them for the twentieth time what his name was. It was a name so long and complicated and exotic and unpronounceable (with any quantity of strange marks over the letters) that I never tried to say it at all. It sounded like an asthmatic old gentleman with an impediment in his speech asking for a whiskey and seltzer. But Laplace and Meunier repeated the name gravely several times and then several times less gravely, and at last discovered how it could best be trifled with. So they had a cat-fight with it, yowling it and spitting

it and sneezing it, but making it sound just as the Hungarian did, only a little more so.

The little musician was furious. He said he had been grossly insulted, and forgot his French and made dreadful sounds in his own tongue (much richer and more complicated than Laplace and Meunier could manage—he quite put them to shame), and wanted to fight them then and there. But our two friends told him no harm was meant, and led him protesting wildly to the punch-bowl, where I found them all, later on, with their arms about each other's necks having a triangular cat-fight, this time, and a much better one.

Toward the end of the evening there was a sort of "march past"—a review before a committee of judges, and an award of prizes. The first prize for the best individual costume went to a certain well-known model of the Quarter, a very handsome young woman of majestic stature and rather Jewish features who impersonated a Byzantine empress and made a quite gorgeous picture. But with swelling retrospective (and wholly vicarious) pride, I relate that the twin prizes for the finest *pair* of costumes were borne away by Mlle. Marie Borrow and M. Veelyaume Castle (not to mention Vladimir the wolf-hound) amid the cheers of all present. I hasten to deprecate my own part in this triumph. It must have been a poor partner indeed who could have disqualified Mary Borrow from that well-deserved meed of praise.

Mary was as pleased as Punch and ran and hugged my Uncle George because, she said, she had to hug somebody, and he was the nicest person there. But I had a sudden vision of the apoplectic horror of Lady Crail could she but have looked in at that rather rowdy gathering and seen her

daughter, as Diana, receiving the plaudits of a horde of students and models. Mary insisted upon knowing what amused me so much, and I told her. Mary said:

"Pooh! Mother'd be enchanted." But I had my doubts, for all that.

Not that they weighed very heavily upon me or clouded the pleasure of that pleasant evening. No cloud that ever was could have darkened my sunlight when Mary said to me, as I wrapped her warm cloak about her:

"We *do* make rather a nice pair, dear old Bill!" I still conceived my tongue to be bound by promises, but my heart wasn't bound by anything at all—save chains of Mary's forging. It leaped and thrilled and was glad. I replied—I don't know what—something quite flat and banal and foolish, but perhaps she knew what I would have answered if only I might, for when I left her in the Avénue de l'Observatoire she patted my arm very kindly and said:

"Cheer up, William! This world is overflowing with surprises. And I've had *such* a good time! And I'm *so* sleepy. Merry Christmas, Bill! and good-night."

I didn't fall asleep for hours with wondering what she had meant by that cryptic expression about the world overflowing with surprises.

Jimmy Fordyce had a party at his place in the Impasse du Maine a day or two after this. Henry begged off, but the rest of us went, and the little Hungarian drank too freely of a suave and deceptive punch and had to be led to the open air. Also, on New-Year's Eve, we had our postponed soirée in the studio, and welcomed the new year in with a great deal of noise and gayety.

If only we could have known what that twelvemonth was

to bring forth! We should have greeted it with soberer faces, I think.

Then, after what seemed to me (and seems even now, in retrospect) just no time at all—a few paltry fleeting days—we awoke to find that it was mid-January and that Mary must leave us to join her mother, who had removed from Algiers to Mentone. She asked me to come and make them a visit there, and Lady Crail wrote to the same effect, but I couldn't, for there was too much work to be done (I was just about to start upon my family-group portrait of the De Saulneses). So once more I had to stand by with a sad heart and a fettered tongue and helpless hands and watch her go from me. It seemed to me that I was always parting from Mary. The reflection that for each parting there must have been a meeting didn't occur to me, but, even if it had, wouldn't have cheered me much at just that time. And the matter was made worse by the fact that Mary went away in one of her most exasperating moods—teasing me and laughing in my face to the very last moment, and expressing a hope that this or that young man—a half-dozen of them, whom she named—would prove his possession of more gallantry than seemed to reside in the heart of W. Castle, and come to the South to play tennis with her.

I wished and prayed that the young men might all die on the way in a train accident of the most painful and revolting description—a very holocaust of suitors.

My Uncle George also departed at the same time, meaning to escort Mary as far as Mentone, there renew his old acquaintance with Lady Crail, and so proceed to Marseilles, where he was to join a yachting-party bound for the Canary Isles and other such delectable regions.

We had, he and I, several long intimate talks during his

visit, and it gave me the warmest and most comfortable and lasting glow about the region of the heart to listen to my uncle's words of praise over the work I was accomplishing, and to see how sincere he was (he couldn't have been insincere, not if he'd tried ever so!) and how genuinely proud and happy. He said he knew well enough that he was no critic himself, but he had talked about me to the good M. Constant, and to the Bart., and to other people who *were* critics, and the things they told him had made him happier than any other thing in the world could conceivably do.

"If only little Sallie could have lived to see it, too, William!" said my Uncle George, and we clasped hands over that, and sat without saying anything for a long time.

Fond and tender and kindly soul! His words cheered me infinitely and filled me with a great swelling desire to toil like a navvy—to go on and on and on and upward—to deserve all he had said to me and to win more praise yet (not for the sake of the praise, but for his pleasure and for his love of me). It was quite true, as he confessed, that he wasn't a critic worth considering, but, when all's said and done, praise from one's own flesh and blood is the sweetest praise of all, and remains longest in the heart, and is worth all the other praise twice over—even though it's over-tolerant and full of prejudice and too prone to see splendors where there aren't any. Heaven pity the toilers in this world whose own households are indifferent to their toil! Theirs is a bitter and thankless lot indeed.

I remember that in a moment of weakness I opened my heart to my Uncle George on the subject of Mary Borrow, telling him how impossible I had found it to give up caring for her—how I had loved her ever since she was six years old and always should love her, but that it wasn't any good,

for she was far too grand and clever a person to be wasted on a poor student of painting—and besides didn't give a rap for me, at least not in the one way that mattered.

My Uncle George looked at me oddly and laughed, which rather hurt my feelings because it was the very first time I had ever known him to fail me in sympathy. But he went on to say that I was still young and only at the beginning of my profession, and that it was rather too early to think of marrying, anyhow. And there wasn't much to say back to that. It was all too true.

I did wish he hadn't laughed, but I soon forgot it, for he went on to talk about Henry, who seemed to trouble him a great deal, and he urged me, once more, to get my friend into the care of good physicians—if it wasn't too late.

"His eyes distress me, William!" said my Uncle George. "I'm afraid about him. He looks to me as if he weren't long for this world. It's somehow all in the eyes."

And at that I shivered, for it recalled to me old Mme. Salomon's warning.

"Il a des yeux fatales."

So our two visitors went away and left us face to face once more with our daily work. Henry's work hadn't been disturbed very much—he wouldn't permit it—but the Bart.'s and mine had, very much, and we found it not so easy to get into stride again. I flew at my family group of the charming Marquise de Saulnes and her still more charming children, and, after a hitch or two and an unfavorable start, managed to turn out a canvas which came nearer pleasing me than anything I had ever done. The De Saulneses were delighted with it and brought any number of people to the studio to see it before it left my hands. M. Constant was

pleased, too, and said I must send it to the Salon later on. He wanted me to paint another picture as well, for exhibition. He said portraiture was, without doubt, my métier, and he was glad to have me represented in the Salon by a portrait as well executed as this; but, after all, the true test of a painter's skill was, and always had been, his ability to paint the nude figure, because that was the most difficult thing of all to do. So he urged me to paint something from the nude to send to the Salon in April, and hinted very strongly that a medal might be the meed of success.

I hadn't the remotest idea what sort of composition to attack, but I sent for Berthe la Rousse and we made any number of experiments—tried and discarded any number of arrangements and poses—finally to settle upon a rather attractive scheme of the crouching figure posed between cross-lights, one cold and bluish, the other warm, after the fashion that M. Besnard was beginning to make famous. So at length I settled down to work, and I don't mind admitting that it was very much harder work than I had been accustomed to even at Julian's (for the two lights complicated matters, you see).

Any fairly equipped craftsman can paint a tolerable portrait, and, if he uses a big brush and whacks in the costume textures with fine, bold, swashbuckling attack (this is a species of confession, for I'm something of a swashbuckler myself), he may quickly become fashionable. But no one who lives can paint from the *nude* like that, and paint well. No tricks, no mannerisms, no bravura to disguise fundamental weakness, are of any avail here. The painter stands, figuratively speaking, as naked as his model. M. Constant was quite right in what he had said to me. The real and ultimate test of an artist's skill is the measure of his ability to

solve the beautiful and subtle and mysterious and extraordinarily difficult problem that is expressed by the human body stripped of its ugly coverings.

It is the highest achievement of a very difficult art, and that is why it is so very often attempted (and with such varying degrees of success)—that and no other reason. I speak with all due regard (which isn't much) to the well-meaning but benighted ladies, and to the clergymen (who ought to know better and to be ashamed) who so frequently make nuisances of themselves and do infinite harm to innocent, unsuspecting young minds, and get laughed at in the newspapers by their campaigns against the "nude in art."

Thank Heaven, these mediæval beings with their unclean minds grow fewer year by year! May the present scribe live to see the last of them hounded out of decent society and driven with curses away into the naked solitudes.

I dare say he'll want to clothe even those!

XXI

IT is a curious fact that as I look back upon the early part of the year 1899 there is a gap, an empty space, extending from the end of January to the first of April. I remember any quantity of the smallest details of Mary Borrow's and my Uncle George's departure from Paris; I remember my undertaking and finishing the triple portrait of the lovely Marquise de Saulnes; I remember starting in then upon my nude study of Berthe la Rousse, and that it was no joke to paint. But the next thing that comes to mind is a spell of unseasonably warm weather that came upon us with the beginning of April so that the studio windows began to stand open, and the lilac buds in the garden turned green overnight. Oh, yes! and in that week my cousins, the Castles, went to Berlin to make a short visit to an old family friend—the lady who had chaperoned them across the Atlantic six years before, and was now ill and returning soon to her native land.

That gap of two months must remain unfilled, I think. Anyhow, nothing of consequence can have happened in it—nothing but the quiet, daily alternation of work and play (or for Henry work and rest. He didn't play very much). But with the coming of April came the preliminary stir and bustle and excitement of preparation for the Salon, for the pictures must be sent in now—almost at once.

I was to offer Mme. de Saulnes's portrait and my nude

study, which I called "Entre Deux Rayons," in slavish imitation of M. Besnard's red-haired lady who hangs now in the Luxembourg gallery. I couldn't think of another name. The Bart.'s "King Lear" hadn't turned out a success, or at least he thought so and knocked it to pieces with a mallet before ever it was finished, but he had had two little bronzes ready—a Greek running boy and a slave girl (the latter quite wonderfully good). Also he was to send two portrait-busts in tinted marble to the Royal Academy in London, and I one of the portraits I had painted during the autumn.

As for Henry, he meant to send one of his five canvases to the Salon, one to the Academy in London, and one to the Secession show in Munich. Beyond these three he hadn't at that time made any plans, though there were two more canvases to be disposed of.

It speaks eloquently for the hold Henry's herculean labors, and the mystery enwrapping them, had gained over us, to say that the Bart. and I were infinitely more excited about the "Introuvable" than about our own hard-wrought works. We first saw the "Unknown Lady"—all five variants of her, so alike and yet each different from the others—on the fifth day of April. I well remember the date. Previous to that we'd never had so much as a glimpse—no one had; not even the model who posed for the hang of the drapery and for the arrangement of the hair; not even Marian, whom Henry made occasional use of for I never knew just what—but I imagine it to have been by way of verifying the modelling about the chin and jaw in Nos. 1 and 5, and the turn of the neck in No. 3.

I shall never forget that April morning, never as long as I live—and no more, I am sure, will the Bart. I shall never forget the tremendous, overpowering thrill of amazement

and inexpressible delight and emotion quite too deep for words which swept across me and took me fairly off my feet like an engulfing wave, when I looked my first upon that inspired work of art. (It was the No. 1, I believe—the first of the series. Henry showed them to us one at a time, leaning the canvases up against the wall of the studio while the Bart. and I sat on a divan across the room.)

Absolute astonishment! That was the feeling that first possessed me to the exclusion of every other feeling in the world—the purest amazement that can exist. It fairly made my head go round.

The thing wasn't like a picture at all; it wasn't like any picture I had ever before seen, and I had the greatest difficulty in realizing that what I looked upon was no more than pigment and canvas. It was like a living woman of extraordinary beauty who stood straining forward and trying so hard to speak that the effort was a positive agony to her and to you who looked.

"No more than pigment and canvas?" Oh, yes! it was more—a great deal more. Henry had painted better than he knew how to paint. The thing was a work of magic, not of art. That passion of longing and love and hope deferred and agony and despair had flowed in some mysterious, miraculous fashion from Henry's eager heart down through his brush, and there had got mixed and blended with paint, and spread out for all to see. The colors my poor friend made use of were squeezed by turns from little leaden tubes and from his heart and soul. The "Introuvable" was painted with equal proportions of life-blood and Windsor-and-Newton.

I can't bear too strongly upon this special and mysterious quality—the something beyond the physical. It was the

first thing that impressed itself upon you, and the last. It was the thing that haunted your nights and days afterward. Everybody saw it and was thrilled by it and tried to explain it but couldn't (even the critics in three countries), and nobody ever forgot it.

But of course it can't be put into words—by me, least of all. I can't even give you a good working idea of it, and, luckily, I needn't try, for you may see for yourselves, either in the Luxembourg Gallery in Paris, or in the Tate, or, before long, I hope, in the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

The Bart. and I sat upon the long divan in the studio, with our hands on our knees, and stared and stared across the room at that incomparable canvas propped up against the opposite wall, and, after the first preliminary exclamations, I think neither of us spoke for five minutes. We couldn't.

I believe it was the old Bart. who first found his tongue after that long silence. He stirred a bit uneasily in his place, and put up one hand to gaze under, and drew a sigh, and shook his head.

"What is there about it?" asked the Bart. in a sort of whisper. "I can't make it out." I said:

"It's the eyes, I think. They've hypnotized me. I can't see anything else." The Bart. cried rather impatiently:

"Of course it's the eyes. That's plain enough. But plenty of other people have painted eyes, before this. It's something more.

"Hang it! the thing's not a picture, it's a—spell. It's magic." And at that I nodded my head.

"Oh, yes! it's magic, right enough. I won't dispute that. Good Lord, what a thing!" Then we fell silent once more for another five minutes.

It was Henry who at last brought us more or less back to the world. He said:

"There's four more of them. I did five. Do you want to see the others?" We said we did, and he brought them out, one by one, and propped them up where the first had been. He asked us to pick out the best one for the Salon, but the Bart. and I were quite beyond anything like that. There was no critical faculty left in us. We could only stare and hold our breaths and make confused sounds.

The Bart kept saying:

"It's magic, that's what it is—magic, you know." I think the eyes of the "Unknown Lady" had begun to hypnotize him—as they'd done with me—so that he couldn't see anything else. They hypnotized everybody. They'll hypnotize you too, one day, if they haven't already done so. They'll capture your gaze and hold it, and you'll stare and stare and stare, and your heart will begin to beat faster, first with sheer discomfort and then with pity and sympathy and keen longing to answer that eager, tortured appeal—to *do* something. Your heart will cry out:

"What does she want? Oh, for God's sake! What does she want of me? What's she trying to say?"

Then somebody will speak, or come before you, to break the spell, you'll awake again to the things round about, and find yourself trembling.

Wait and see!

Henry gave us a little more time and then asked once more which of the five canvases he'd best send to the Salon. I said:

"Great heavens, Henry! Any one! All of them! What does it matter? They're the five greatest pictures in the world. Who can say which is the best?" The Bart. got up

and solemnly shook Henry's hands. He was almost beyond speech.

"Old Bill's right," said he. "L'enfant dit vrai. I feel as if I'd never seen painting before. I'm all turned upside down. We both are, I think. Those canvases—they're unapproachable. There's nothing in the world like them. Whichever one you send in—it 'll be the one great picture in the Salon. You can't just shut your eyes and choose."

Henry stared at us with a kind of dull wonder—rather like a nice, good-natured dog. I actually believe he thought we were poking fun at him.

"Oh, that's all silly rot," he said, finally. "I suppose the things are bad enough—so far as the *painting* goes. Of course I know I can't really paint—not like Bill, here—"

(I could have fallen at his feet and wept!)

"But," said Henry, scowling at us, "that doesn't matter. They're *portraits*, you understand—just portraits—photographs in color. As photographs they're not so bad, but of course you two can't judge about that. You don't know."

He was perfectly serious. We could see it plainly. He actually didn't know that those five superb masterpieces—unique in the world—were masterpieces at all. And, what was more, he didn't care!

The Bart. and I fell upon him and deluged him with a very cataract of talk. We shook him by the arm. We dragged him across the floor to point out the incomparable excellences—the unspeakable perfections of what he had done. We got quite angry with him, and must have been very funny indeed, but Henry never even smiled. He listened with the politest and most winning attention, but I don't believe he heard a word of all that eloquence. It was exactly like the old days in the Louvre. We might as well have

harangued a deaf man. And in the end we gave it up—as much through sheer exhaustion of breath as anything.

I think the only visible effect we had upon Henry, whatever, was to embarrass him. Praise of any sort always made him shy and self-conscious and rather unhappy, so that he tried to get away and hide. He got away, this time, saying that he had to see a frame-maker, and the Bart. and I went back to the "Unknown Lady."

By dint of staring her out of countenance and deliberately assuming a cold and hostile attitude of mind, we were at last able (with some difficulty) to rid ourselves of that strange enchantment and to look upon the canvas as a picture—nothing more. Even then it wasn't easy to keep one's head. Just as painting, pure and simple, the thing was a triumph of inspired skill, but we soon saw that it wasn't perfect—not by any means. It was amazingly vivid—almost violent in the way it stood out from the canvas, but the anatomical drawing about the jaw and throat and base of the neck was pretty shaky, and in the folds of drapery and the one exposed hand it was downright bad. We said so, the Bart and I, and then called ourselves names for the puny, yapping, snarling, ungrateful curs we were to cavil at this epoch-making masterpiece because, forsooth, an insignificant hand wasn't what it might be. We felt very humble and stopped our criticising and leaned back among the cushions, and the "Unknown Lady" took us in thrall once more, and we forgot everything.

In looking back over these last few pages I find that, oddly enough, I haven't described the "Introuvable" as a picture at all. In a way it isn't necessary that I should, for most of those who haven't seen her in Paris or in London have, at least, seen a photographic reproduction of some

kind. It hangs in hundreds of homes. Still, for the benefit of the few who haven't even seen this, I will say in plain, bald words that the picture represents a very beautiful young woman, in three-quarter length, standing against a background of nothing at all—a brownish-green wall or curtain. The young woman is clad in heavy white drapery that hangs in long, straight folds and is open at the throat and low down over the bosom. She has brown hair that hangs in two heavy plaits before her shoulders and down almost to her knees. Her lovely mouth is parted a little and it is red, but there's no color in her cheeks.

And she seems to be all eyes. It is a long time before you see anything else.

I find that in speaking of her I have used the words "painful" and "agonized." They may be misleading. The "Unknown Lady" doesn't seem to suffer. She isn't unhappy, but the eagerness with which she leans toward you out of her frame, the passionate yearning in her gaze, the almost intolerable keenness of her desire to speak—to say something—one doesn't know what, have for me (and I know for many others) all the effect of pain that rises to agony. But perhaps the pain is our own, not the "Unknown Lady's"—our own because we can't help her, can't answer that question she eternally presses upon us, can't even make out what the question is.

You must see for yourselves.

I spoke to the Bart. about an odd sensation I had felt from the very first moment that my eyes fell upon the "Unknown Lady." There stirred deep down within me the vague, pale, faint shadow of a conviction that somewhere, in this life or another, I had seen her before. It wasn't strong enough to

be called a memory—it was the thinnest wraith of a memory or else a phantom that was like one. Sometimes it almost came to the surface and I was about to grasp it, but then it slipped away again and was lost. I asked the Bart. if he felt anything of the kind and he said he didn't—that the "Introuvable" was not in the least like anybody *he* had ever seen. He suggested that my ghost of a half recollection was one of those tantalizing experiences we all have now and then and which perhaps really are recollections from a previous existence, but, much more likely, remembered bits of dreams or a patchwork of quite different things combined in a new way.

That sounded very reasonable and I became convinced that it was true, and put the thing out of my mind, but it recurred several times afterward, and annoyed me very much.

So then we fell to talking about Henry and the place he had so suddenly taken, all in a single leap, at the very head of his profession, and how humble and proud and glad we ought to be (and were) to have such an astonishing genius for a friend; especially how proud *I* ought to feel when I reflected that it actually was I who had set him on the path to greatness.

We talked of his future and the towering heights he might be expected to climb—heights as yet untrodden by man—and worked ourselves up to quite a frenzy of enthusiasm and excitement about it.

"We must make him take better care of himself, though!" said the Bart., shaking his head. "Poor old Henry looks like a ghost, and his eyes look as if they'd seen one— Well, so they have, I dare say. So they have! Still, we can't have him falling ill."

And there I was quite with the Bart., for I had worried a great deal over Henry's health. He looked on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and as if he hadn't physical strength enough to combat any kind of a breakdown at all.

So we made elaborate plans for hustling him away to Italy at the end of the month, or even sooner if possible. Probably he wouldn't want to go, but we said we'd chloroform him, if necessary, and were very fierce and determined about it. If Henry had come in just then I rather think he'd have been kidnapped on the spot. But he didn't, and it struck one o'clock, so the Bart. and I went out to lunch instead.

XXII

WE come at last to a momentous day—the 28th of April, 1899—the sudden prodigious climax, all undreamed of, all unlooked for, to which these hundreds of pages of Henry Trent's biography have been leading up—the amazing goal of so many years of toil and hope and faith unshaken on the part of my haunted friend.

Rest after labor. After the long night the golden day.

It fell among us, that amazing climax, like a meteor from a blue sky, leaving us stunned and all but blinded. The echo of its explosion reverberates still in my head as I write —after more than ten years.

On the 28th of April my cousins Marian and Naïla Castle returned to Paris from their visit in Germany, and you may be sure we were very glad to welcome them back. Henry's and my pictures and the Bart.'s works of sculpture had meanwhile been sent in to the Salon and to the Academy in London, and all of them accepted save one of the Bart.'s small bronzes (which made him very angry). It was "L'Introuvable" no. 1 that went to the Salon, the No. 5 to Burlington House, and the No. 3 to Munich. Nos. 2 and 4 remained still in the studio, waiting to be disposed of.

M. Constant came to see Henry's five pictures before "sending-in" time, and was as amazed and excited about them as the Bart. and I had been. It is the only time I can remember ever to have seen him quite incoherent. He said

not a word then, nor, so far as I am aware, at any future time, of the technical faults in painting. The "Introuvable" enchanted him completely.

By-the-way, it was the Bart. who suggested that name—"Introuvable." Henry was pleased with it at once and so was I. We wanted to use it for all five alike, but it was thought better to give the one that went to England an English title, and so we hit upon "Unknown Lady"—nothing like so suggestive, but you can't translate introuvable into any one word of English. "Unfindable" isn't a word at all.

Lady Crail and Mary returned to England just before my cousin's arrival, taking my Uncle George with them, but they went by sea on a P. & O. liner from Marseilles (her ladyship thinking the salt air would help her throat—which it didn't). So we missed them, and I was disconsolate but not too low in spirits, for the Bart. and I meant to start off in a few days to Italy, and Henry—wonderful to relate!—had promised to go with us. I think he was beginning to realize that his health needed building up.

Another thing that had helped to cheer me was an interview I had with Naïla's doctor, whom I met by chance in the street, and who asked me how my cousin enjoyed the world, now that her glasses were off. It was a great surprise, for I'd heard nothing of this at all. I explained to him that the two young ladies were in Germany and doubtless had meant to take us by storm on their return, for Naïla had said nothing about her eyes in the letter or two I'd had from her. I asked him if it was possible that his permission could have been misunderstood, and he said, no, that he had made it all quite clear, not to Naïla herself, but to Marian, with whom he always left his instructions because she was so jealously

fond of doing everything for her sister, and indeed did it so well.

I went home from this interview, full of the good news, but, on the way, decided to say nothing, after all, for it was plain that Naïla meant to surprise us and I didn't want to spoil her dramatic little coup.

My cousins came in upon us quite unexpectedly about mid-afternoon of the 28th (we hadn't looked for them until the morrow) where Henry and the Bart. and I sat about the tea-table in the garden smoking our pipes, drinking whiskey-and-water in long glasses—and the Bart. and I, I dare say, arguing about something.

You may well believe we were glad to see them!

Marian, I thought, looked ill—rather sallow and dull-eyed and sombre, but she flushed up at sight of Henry, and those dull eyes of hers got lights in them. Naïla looked well and charming, with a better color (though she was never pink—a sort of warm ivory, at this time) and a rounder neck than I had ever seen in her. There wasn't the slightest sign about her of a heart malady (or any other malady, either) and hadn't been for a long time. It astonishes me to look back and find that, after the first two or three months, that Damoclean Sword seems to have been pretty well forgotten by all of us, even though we knew its presence.

Well, Italian peasants live and labor on the crater of volcanoes—and sing their songs, too. I dare say Damocles himself toward the end of that memorable feast forgot the bad joke that hung over his head, and cheered up and had the very devil of a good time. I hope he did.

It can't be denied that the constant daily and nightly presence of peril soon robs the peril of all its terrors.

Naïla looked not only well but also quite ridiculously

young in a sort of white flannel yachting-suit which left her throat bare (that was partly for health's sake—a hardening process) and, over it, a long coat of heavier rough white material. But she still wore the disfiguring goggles, and, after I had kissed her on both cheeks, and pumped her hands up and down and told her how glad I was to have her back and what a nice person I believed her to be, I asked about them.

"What have you got those glasses on again for?"

Naïla looked astonished and said she'd never had them off. It wasn't allowed yet. And Marian, who heard us talking about goggles, came up and added, rather sharply, that I mustn't urge Naïla to be rash. It might do permanent harm.

I didn't quite understand, but I was afraid I was beginning to—a dreadful, little, mean, and crawling suspicion was beginning to creep into my mind. It made me angry, and, without stopping to think, I told them both exactly what the doctor had said to me a week ago. Marian turned the most dreadful gray-green color and began to tremble, and her sister looked at her and at me and back again, and began to tremble also. So then I stammered out something hurried and foolish about how easy it was to misunderstand doctors' instructions, and how, perhaps, I hadn't got his meaning quite clear, myself.

It was a wretched moment for everybody, and a long one. I thought Marian would burst into tears, but she controlled herself after an instant and said quite smoothly she didn't see how she could have made such a blunder—if it *was* a blunder—but that of course she'd find out immediately, that very day.

Naïla said "Yes," in a low tone, and suddenly raised her

hands to the dark goggles, but, after a moment, took them down again, and shook her head. She said:

"No! I'll wait. I want the very first thing I see clearly to be Henry's picture in the Salon. It won't be long."

Then Henry spoke up.

"Oh, you needn't wait at all unless you want to. Two of the pictures are still here in the studio. I did five, you see—all more or less the same thing."

Naïla clasped her hands together, hard, in front of her (which was a way she had when deeply moved), and cried:

"Oh, truly, Henry? Truly? Do you mean it?" She turned to me as if she thought he might be joking, and I laughed and said:

"Oh, yes! They're here, right enough, and you'd better believe they're worth seeing, too! Shall we go up and have a look? Come along, then!"

We turned toward the pavillon, Marian, who had been standing a little apart with her eyes on the ground, first, and the Bart. following her. But Naïla and Henry fell behind, and, when I had reached the foot of the outer stair, I let the others go on ahead, and waited.

Henry seemed to be a good deal emotionné, and not too steady of voice and hand. There were spots of high color in his cheeks and that was unusual with him. I heard him say:

"It's good to have you back again, Naïla! Oh, it's good to have you back! You were away so long, and—I was a sort of monomaniac for so long before that. I feel as if I hadn't seen you for months." Naïla gave a little low laugh (and that wasn't too steady, either). She shook her head at him and held him a moment by the coat lapels, looking up into his face through the big dark goggles.

"Oh, never mind about me! Yes, it *has* been a long time, hasn't it? *I* know. Tell me about the portrait! Is it good, Henry? Is it *like?* Shall I see her just as she is?" and Henry nodded his head.

"It's like. Yes, it's a good portrait—they all are—all five. I don't know whether they're good *pictures* or not; in fact, I don't care. But it's like her. There's no doubt about that."

Naïla let go of his coat with a little sigh, and they came along together toward where I was standing. I began to say "The others have gone on ahead—" when quite suddenly, in the middle of my words there came from the studio above us where the windows stood wide open a single loud cry—a scream that was almost a shriek—and, hard upon it, Marian's voice, calling upon her sister, twice—

"Naïla! Naïla!"

Naïla caught hold of Henry's arm and turned quite white.

"What is it?" she said, in a whisper. "Marian's calling me. Oh, what's the matter?"

We heard running, stumbling feet, and Marian came flying down among us. I had to skip aside to get out of her way. She faced her sister, breathing very hard, and her face was ghastly. I had never seen her in anything like such a state, and thought she must suddenly have gone mad or into some dreadful fit of hysteria.

Naïla went forward a step toward her with her hands held out and trying to speak. She was frightened, and the words wouldn't come. But Marian, breathing still in that gasping, labored fashion, struck at her hands and drew back against the wall of the house.

"I hate you! I hate you!" she cried out in the bitterest voice I ever heard, and, quite suddenly, turned and ran away

down the brick walk that led to the street. She was out of sight before any of us could find our tongues. Then, when she was quite gone, we stared at each other as if we'd seen a ghost.

I was afraid poor little Naïla would collapse where she stood trembling and clinging to Henry's arm, and I said:

"Marian's upset and nervous. You mustn't mind her. She wasn't looking herself when she arrived. You mustn't mind her, you know. Come along!" Naïla drew a long breath, seemed to pull herself together, and we went on up the stairs, finding the Bart. at the top, who stood open-mouthed, looking as if *he'd* seen a ghost, too. He pulled me apart and whispered:

"What the devil's wrong with Marian? The girl frightened me stiff. She took one look at the "Introuvable" and began to scream as if she were being murdered. Then she was off." I said:

"Nerves! She wasn't herself. That business about the doctor upset her. Something's queer there. I want to know more about it, later on."

Then we turned about, and Naïla was crossing the room toward the "Introuvable" no. 3, which stood on the floor under the north-light, leaning up against one of the big easels. She stopped half-way, and put up her hands to the bows of her goggles.

"I've got my eyes closed," she called over her shoulder.

"Now, then!" She pulled the goggles off with a quick jerk and sent them flying away across the floor where they fell with a crash and a little tinkle of breaking glass. And she looked.

She didn't speak, but we three others saw her put up one

hand and brush it across her eyes, as if she didn't see well after all.

I felt a sudden awful dread that she'd been too precipitous, that I'd misunderstood the doctor, that irreparable harm had been done, that the swift flood of light had blinded her; I went cold all over.

Naïla made that odd, helpless gesture once more—brushing her hand across her eyes. I heard her speak to herself in a whisper:

"I don't understand. I don't understand." And she half turned toward us, and then back again. I saw a strong shudder go over her from head to feet, and I was still cold with fear and wanted to call out to her, but I couldn't. My tongue wouldn't stir.

Then she did the oddest thing! She put up her hands again, with a swift movement, and began to pull her hair down. It came tumbling about her shoulders in a great bright-brown mass—any quantity of it. I didn't know Naïla had such a lot. With the same swift movements she drew it forward in two loose ropes before her shoulders, and it hung far below her waist—nearly to her knees. She turned round, facing us full, and the Bart. and I screamed aloud like women.

It was the "Introuvable" come to life—the unfindable found—the "Unknown Lady" made known at last.

And it was Naïla!

I remember that scene with all the strange, unreal vividness of a vivid dream, and it was as a vivid dream that I lived through it. I believe I became convinced that we were all dreaming or playing some solemn game, or quite, quite mad.

The thing was too preposterous to be real!

Naïla stood there beside the portrait, swaying back and forth on her feet, and her great gray eyes—that the Bart. and Henry had never seen and I only in her childhood, years before—they blazed upon us as they blazed from the painted canvas beyond her.

There are miracles wrought, it seems, even in these unbelieving days of ours.

Henry began to move forward toward her, walking with queer, stiff, faltering steps, his hands out before him like a man who gropes in thick darkness. He came near where she was, and halted, leaning forward—staring into Naïla's face.

The heavy white coat fell in long straight folds almost to her feet—open at the throat. Her hair streamed down in two rivers of warm, lovely color.

Henry gave a little, gasping, sobbing cry—it was her name, or he meant it to be—and fell upon his knees.

Then at last Naïla stirred, and bent over to lift him, but he slipped from her hands and lay huddled about her feet. She looked up and called to us:

"Come quickly! He has fainted. Henry has fainted." And the Bart. and I awoke from our stupor and ran to help. We lifted him up and laid him flat on one of the divans. He was limp and heavy, and a dreadful yellow-green color, like a dead man.

I own I was horribly frightened, for I had never seen a man faint before. But the Bart. had, and wasn't frightened at all, but quite cool and swift and efficient. He had a glass of water, brought from I don't know where, before you could have said "knife"; and he told Naïla and me to stand away, and, from a little distance, flung the water hard in Henry's face.

There wasn't a sign of life, and Naïla began to sob and whimper like a little child. But the Bart. fetched more water and repeated his clever performance, and this time it succeeded. Henry gasped and sneezed and tried to turn his face away, and he tried to speak, too, but only got as far as "What the devil are you—" and stopped.

Then Naïla pushed in between the Bart. and me and fell upon her knees beside the couch where Henry lay. Her hair streamed down about his head and shut them in together.

He must have opened his eyes then and found all hopes and dreams come true, for the "Introuvable" was there, very close and warm and wonderful (and, I should think, rather heavy upon his breast). He gave a kind of whispering sob and said her name in a weak voice, over and over and over again. Naïla laid her head down on him and began to cry, and at that the Bart. and I tippytoed out of the room and down the creaking stair into the garden.

There in the warm spring sunshine we faced each other at last, and I don't know what *I* looked like, but the old Bart.'s face would have made me laugh if there had been any laugh left in me. He looked as if he had seen *two* ghosts this time.

I believe the same thought came to us both at one and the same moment, for we turned, without a word, and made for the tea-table where the whiskey and water were. We didn't know whose glass was which, but we didn't care, either. We drank all there was left in them all, and wanted more. Then we filled our pipes and lit them with very wobbly, uncertain hands, and the Bart. kicked a tree, hard, and made a face, and stood on one leg like a stork—so it must have hurt and he must have been persuaded that he was awake.

I wasn't so sure.

In the end he said, violently:

"I don't believe it. Damn it! I don't believe it." He didn't explain what it was that he didn't believe, but I knew.

"It's all some dreadful, horrible, incredible, hallucinatious mistake!" said the Bart. "She—poor Naïla *thought* the picture looked like her, and pulled her hair down—and she happened to have on white and—and we were all excited and we thought it, too. It *must* be something like that. Anything else is too incredible altogether—preposterous."

"And Marian?" I asked.

The Bart. used quite shocking language and took his head between his hands. I understood him to say that we were all bewitched—mad—mad as a whole family of hatters and March hares crossed.

"*It can't be!*" he cried, angrily. "Why, Henry has known her for eighteen months. They've been together nearly every day of all that time. D'you mean to tell me that he wouldn't have *known?* What's all this 'affinity,' 'soul-mate' stuff good for if you're not going to recognize your affinity when you meet her—just because she wears goggles? Rubbish!"

I pointed out that Henry had been strongly and mysteriously drawn to Naïla from the beginning, that she was the one woman who had ever seduced his thoughts away from the "Introuvable" (for Olga Samaroff couldn't be seriously counted), and that, as for her looks, we must remember Henry had seen her first when she was a mere pallid, washed-out, emaciated ghost of herself, and, doubtless, had kept that image of her in his mind ever since.

"Why, he didn't even notice," said I, "that she'd changed—grown better in health, and prettier, last summer at Grez.

You must remember that! Besides, the 'Introuvable' in the portrait (and so in Henry's mental picture of her) is all eyes. Well, so is Naïla, now her goggles are off. Hide her eyes and there's precious little left. No! that's not true. There's a good deal left, but, for all that, the eyes *are* the chief thing—the wonderful thing. I can quite understand old Henry going on all this time with poor little Naïla beside him, and never knowing. S'pose you'd never seen Henry in your life—only photographs of him at his best (Henry's precious near all eyes, too, you know), and then suppose he came along, thin as a living skeleton and white and ill and with big, smoked goggles on. Do you think you'd know who he was?"

The Bart. conceded that he probably wouldn't, and was impressed and almost convinced, and we sat and smoked a long while, shaking our heads, and muttering, and exclaiming that we'd be damned, and calling Heaven to witness that there never had been such an extraordinary and incredible affair.

The Bart. evolved a new theory—or rather he didn't evolve it, it sprang from him full-armed like Pallas-Athene. Henry's affection for Naïla had worked a kind of slow chemical change upon his mental image of the "Introuvable," until Naïla's face and the face of the "Unknown Lady" had, without his realizing it, merged into one.

This rather took my breath away, it seemed to be so clever and so possible, but I didn't believe in it at all. It had all kinds of improbabilities concealed in it (as if the whole amazing affair wasn't wildly improbable, every way you chose to look at it!). Among other things, I wanted to be told how Henry could have known what Naïla's wonderful eyes looked like when he'd never seen them. The Bart.

found some difficulty with that and with every other question I propounded, and we argued and disputed and quarrelled and ended exactly where we'd begun—in the air.

It began to get chill where we were sitting and we got up and began to walk back and forth, up and down the longest of the little garden allées, bras dessus, bras dessous. We didn't talk any more, but smoked our faithful pipes in silence and tried, each of us, I think, to realize that the impossible had actually literally happened—heaven come down upon earth—and that Henry's long quest was over. We were still very much shaken and bewildered—none too sure that the whole thing wasn't a dream. I myself thought of at least a hundred excellent reasons why it couldn't be true, and I'm sure the Bart. thought of a hundred others.

So we tramped up and down, and wondered what was being said between those two in the studio above us, and waited.

It must have been, I should think, an hour before we heard their feet on the outer stair.

They came down to us with pale and shining and abstracted faces. Naïla had put up her hair and pinned her hat on, and Henry had a hat, too. He looked dazed, like a man under the influence of a drug, and didn't speak at all, but Naïla smiled upon us whitely and her great gray eyes looked twice as large as eyes ought to be, and they had taken on something of the expression that Henry's had had these six months past—an odd, fixed look that is entirely indescribable—as if they saw things the rest of us couldn't see. Perhaps they had been like that all the time, though, behind those masking goggles.

Des yeux fatales.

Now that I think of it, the eyes of the "Introuvable" have

the same expression—all five pairs of them. If you've seen, you will know what I'm trying to describe and can't.

I took Naïla by the shoulders, and she hid her face against me for an instant. She seemed rather weak and limp. I made her look up, and I asked her:

"Did you know, Naïla, all the while?" My cousin shook her head.

"No, Bill, never! I never had the least idea. I just knew that I—that I loved him. Oh, dear Bill, I'll tell you all about it, later on, but not now. I can't speak!"

It was true. She couldn't. I let her go, and she and Henry went away together. They were going to the Avénue de l'Observatoire first, and then, I believe, out somewhere to dinner. Naïla wanted to see Marian and make peace with her, but when they reached the apartment Marian had locked herself in her own room and would neither come out nor answer to her sister's knocking. The next morning she had recovered so far as to be very like her old self, but I am afraid the thing that had come between the two remained there—though never spoken of or referred to in any way—up to the very end, and I know that Marian, in her silent, brooding way, suffered over it much more than Naïla did.

There was no balm for *her* in Gilead, or anywhere else, to salve a heart twice bruised and broken.

But the Bart. and I, thus left to ourselves, went back upstairs to the studio, and gazed once more for a long time at that great picture which leaned against the wall. It brought back afresh to us the incredible, the fantastic wonder of the miracle that had occurred. Once more it fairly took our breaths away and set us to trembling.

But now at last I think it resolved our doubts for good and all. We looked at the Rossetti mouth, at the round,

sharp, beautiful chin, at the lovely contour of cheek and jaw and throat—and, in the light of our new observation of my cousin's unmasked eyes, at the great, gray, splendid, mysterious, tender, loving eyes of the "Unknown Lady," and could doubt no longer.

"Oh, yes!" said the Bart., after half an hour of silence. "It's Naïla, right enough. There's no good in wondering or arguing. That's Naïla." And he sighed and shook his head and quoted a line from the late W. Shakespeare's tragedy of "Hamlet" which has become so dreadfully trite that I refuse to set it down here.

It was six o'clock, we found, and so we changed our shabby paint or clay smeared studio jackets for others a little more presentable and went out to the Taverne du Panthéon in the Boulevard St. Michel, where we sat on the terrasse in abstracted silence and drank each an apératif (I'm not sure it wasn't two, and that the apératifs weren't Pernods au sucre).

Then we decided that we must do ourselves especially well that evening at dinner, and so drove in a fiacre to the famous Tour d'Argent, where M. Frédéric greeted us in person, and we did ourselves so well that walking home afterward wasn't even to be thought of, and we drove, in another fiacre, with our faces upturned to where the stars ought to have been but weren't, for it was coming on to rain.

"April showers make May flowers," as the Bart. philosophically observed.

And when I looked in upon Henry on my way to bed he was sleeping like a baby—with his mouth open.

XXIII

I HAD a long talk with Naïla the next day, and she told me, as she had promised to do, "all about it." There wasn't much to tell, and I was rather disappointed. I'd been expecting some mysterious double-life history, like Henry's own, from Henry's affinity, but my cousin hadn't had anything of the sort. Perhaps that is putting it a bit too strongly, for she had, after all, experienced, both during childhood and later on, rather more of those imaginative and make-believe gropings toward something that she couldn't reach or even visualize than are the lot, I think, of most little girls—even lonely and fanciful ones. Still the utmost of her imaginings and make-beliefs and spiritual experiences were far, far behind Henry's. There hadn't been, for her, any little phantom playmate in a tree-house to steal out to at night. She'd never even seen a tree-house—to say nothing of a phantom.

The one unusual and significant fact that I could disentangle from a quantity of talk was that, from the very beginning, she had had or had made up—I don't know which—a fairly definite ideal of boyish or, later on, manly beauty and charm and bravery and general nobility. Of course every little girl possesses one of these as part of the necessary furniture of life, but Naïla's ideal Prince Charming, unlike the others, never altered—never from her earliest recollection. She couldn't tell how she got him, whether he came

into her consciousness ready-made, or she built him up like a picture-puzzle out of nicest bits of the nicest little boys she'd ever seen or read about; she knew only that from the dawn of history he'd been there—a tall, romantic-looking youth with black hair and dark-blue eyes and a sweet and winning smile.

This sounds, as I have put it, a good deal like Henry's own experience, but it wasn't really. There was an immense difference. Henry's mysterious lady was a perfectly definite mental picture, as you have learned; Naïla's romantic youth was—or seemed to her—no more than an ideal type. She never saw him in anything like a vision. She knew no more than that, if her Prince Charming ever came to claim her, he'd be tall and black-haired and blue-eyed, and he'd have a certain kind of altogether delightful smile.

Still, when she met Henry—even in that first moment in the Rue du Luxembourg—she knew (as she had said to me once before) that there couldn't ever be another Prince Charming for *this* Sleeping Beauty—that *her* fate was settled, for her, then and there (a sad fate, alas! for she hadn't the least hope of ever becoming anything more than a pallid, anæmic wreck, quite absurdly unfit for such a magnificent being as Henry).

On top of that, Henry's naïve disclosures, the very same evening, in the matter of his life-search for a lovely lady already seen in visions! No wonder my cousin burst into tears and frightened her guest half out of his wits.

Prince Charming found and lost again all in the same momentous day! Lost long before he had ever been found—bound to a lifelong quest and to service of another Sleeping Beauty altogether. Poor little Naïla!

"But not even that could stop me from loving him, dear Bill, not even the knowledge that it was quite, quite hopeless —forever hopeless. Nothing could.

"And oh, to think that all the while it was I—*I!* . . . It's a very sweet reward for all I've had to suffer . . . all the loneliness and pain and disappointment and heart-sickness and hopelessness. Bill, if I knew I'd got to die to-night I should still be, oh, so glad! to have lived—just as I've lived . . . and to have suffered everything I've suffered . . . all for these past twenty-four hours. It would have been worth it, ten times over! . . . Do you know? I lay awake last night for hours and hours, trembling with happiness, but, at the last, I began to be a little afraid. Suppose I should fail him! I nearly died to think of it. Suppose I shouldn't turn out to be all the things he thinks I am. Suppose I should disappoint him horribly. It's quite possible, you know. In fact, it's very likely. If I found out he was disappointed I should cut my throat. I'm sure I should. Oh, yes, indeed! that would be too dreadful to bear. I should cut my throat."

She got herself quite worked up, all over again, with thinking how awful it would be to disappoint Henry, but I laughed at her, assuring her that if Henry should find himself in any such frame of mind as that it would be *his* throat that ought to be cut, to punish him for sheer ingratitude; but that she wasn't to worry, for it was all too absurd for words.

"Henry's got such an exalted idea of you, my dear," said I, "and he's such a deaf, dumb, and blind bat, at best, that he'd never notice if you turned out to be a regular shrew. You could beat him, or put salt in his coffee, and he'd never know the difference. Don't you go worrying about old Henry! Old Henry's as stubborn as a mule. He has made

up his mind to be quite ecstatic for the rest of his life, and ecstatic he'll be. You take my word for it!"

So she was appeased.

"You're not exactly what I should call flattering to *me*, dear Bill, but you're a great comfort, and no family should be without you. I think I'll cheer up." And Naïla kissed the top of my head and went away singing.

Later on that day there was a great discussion about ways and means. Henry, of course, was all for getting himself married at once, without delay, that very hour or to-morrow morning at the latest. We pointed out to him that, luckily for impetuous people, but of course most *un*luckily for him, it isn't by any means as easy as all that. Foreigners marrying in France have to get through no end of delay and legal complication. It's much easier to go to England and have the thing properly done there. So he said we must all go to England by the night boat that very evening, but Naïla, true to her sex, wanted time to back and fill, and coquette, and get used to the idea, and buy frills, and make a thousand other preparations for the holy state. Henry was by turns reproachful and frantic, and, I think, unsupported, she would have given in to him, but the Bart. and I said we'd be hanged if we left Paris before the Vernissage at the Salon, which was three days ahead, and Naïla and Marian backed us up so that the day of hegira was fixed for the third of May.

But it was a severe strain upon old Henry, and he sulked over it for hours.

The Vernissage was on the thirtieth—a Sunday—and we moved in a body upon the old Galérie des Machines, dressed in our proudest and most beautiful clothes. It was the last

time we should ever enter that big, ugly enclosure, for the building was soon to be torn down to make room for the Exposition Universelle de 1900, and the two salons were hereafter to be housed in the splendid Grand Palais. My cousins and Henry and the Bart. and J. Fordyce and I all went together—Henry only under the strongest compulsion, for he didn't want to go at all. A difficulty had arisen about Naïla, for it suddenly occurred to the Bart. that she was sure to be recognized by everybody as the original of the "Introuvable"; so for the last time she put on a pair of the old, disfiguring, disguising goggles—the only pair she hadn't smashed—and said she felt in them like a detective or a police spy.

Almost the first person we met inside the doors was M. Constant, who hastened at once to Henry and, catching him by the arm, pointed down the big, hot, glaring room.

"Voilà, mon cher! Voilà comme tout le monde regarde votre tableau! Mais tout le monde, je vous assure! Vous êtes en train d'avoir un succès fou!"

We all gazed where he pointed and, sure enough, there was a huge knot of people crowded together before a very conspicuously hung picture, though at that distance we couldn't make out what picture it was. Henry gave one look down the room, uttered a kind of terrified bleat, turned tail and literally ran from the place. M. Constant was furious, for he had hoped to take his protégé round and present him to all the notabilities who were there. He was for running after Henry and dragging him back, but we told him that our friend was exceedingly fleet of foot, and was, by this time, far away—if he wasn't hiding in a café somewhere. So Henry never got introduced to the beauty and talent and wealth and aristocracy of Paris. I told him

afterward what he had missed and he became profane and shocked me dreadfully.

We fought our way into that pushing, voluble throng for a brief glance at the "Introuvable," who looked very lovely and vivid and compelling and magnetic (and completely ruined every other picture near her), and for a little while, we listened with great amusement to the comments of the people about us, who were much intrigued by that odd title. They wanted to know what it meant, and invented all sorts of things that it *might* have meant (but didn't) and said that it ought to receive the Médaille d'Honneur. Then, lest we should burst out laughing, we went away to find my "Entre Deux Rayons" and the De Saulnes portrait, which were very well hung, and seemed to be popular—especially the portrait. We found the Bart.'s little bronze, too, which was rather hidden away, as small bronzes are apt to be; and, afterward, made a slow tour of the building, stopping to speak to a few acquaintances and congratulate them, and to Laplace, and condole with him, because he had been refused this time—but it didn't depress him in the least. He was strolling about, arm in arm, with two very rowdy friends, and seemed in the best of all spirits. But toward one o'clock we left the Galérie des Machines and drove in two fiacres across the river to Ledoyen's in the Champs Élysées, where we had planned to lunch. We found Henry waiting for us there, and Naïla smashed the last pair of goggles, and we feasted royally.

Je sais bien ce que je dis. *I* selected the food and drink.

I had written a long letter to Lady Crail, telling her the great news—that Naïla was the "Introuvable," and that we were all coming to England to get married (at least Henry

and Naïla were to enter that state), and at once received a telegram from her, saying:

"Await letter." We awaited it, and it was a pressing invitation to us all to come to Shotland for as long as we were to be on that side of the Channel. Her ladyship said that my Uncle George was still with them in the country, and that she herself didn't mean to go up to London until the middle of June, for she wasn't really well yet.

"Do come to us, William! It will give us *such* pleasure. And make the others come, too! We shall be the nicest party you ever saw. I'll be a sort of mother to dear Naïla Castle—who needs one, just now, I'm sure."

We talked this pleasant and kindly invitation over, and, in the end, decided to accept it (to my huge delight). So, on the fourth of May, behold us all united in Oxfordshire, under that most hospitable of roofs—"the nicest party I ever saw," as Lady Crail had promised.

And you may safely believe that the two lovers were made much of and petted and spoiled and coddled by her ladyship and Mary, who were quite beside themselves with almost incredulous wonder and delight at the astonishing dénoûment of Henry's quest. They said, doubtless in sober truth, that it was far and away the most wildly romantic thing they had ever heard of, and wanted to talk about it from morning to night—a desire the Bart. and I were only too willing to indulge them in, for we ourselves hadn't yet got over our breathless excitement. But Henry and Naïla didn't want to talk at all—at least not to *us*. They wanted to sit in the garden together or go off on long walks, and they did, and we others beamed upon them from a distance and sighed and said what a beautiful thing was Love's Young Dream.

The plan had first been to procure a special license, and get the thing over as quickly as possible, but Lady Crail wouldn't even listen to any such idea. She said it was indecent, and sounded like an elopement or the sort of thing guilty "parties" did immediately after a divorce decree had been made absolute. She pointed out that the good old fashion of putting up banns would require only three weeks, and that three weeks was none too long a period in which to get a young woman ready for the altar—in fact, much too short. Naïla thought so, too (the wretched little traitor!), and so did we all. Poor Henry just had to endure it with such patience as he possessed (which wasn't much). So the banns were put up in the local parish church, and Naïla began to go up to London twice a week to be fitted for frocks and frills.

There was one among us at this time whom I had never expected to see. I had begun to believe he didn't exist at all, but was a sort of *Mr. Harris*. Lord Crail, for some reason that nobody seemed able to discover (himself, least of all), was spending a month in the bosom of his family. I think he must suddenly have remembered his wife and daughter and come home to see what they looked like.

I was sorry to find him at Shotland, for I was afraid he would spoil the pleasant, happy atmosphere, but I soon discovered that I needn't have been alarmed, for the Earl neither contributed to nor took from the quality of the atmosphere. He simply didn't affect it at all. He was the most extraordinarily detached human being I ever saw, and wandered among us rather like an incurious, not unamiable, ghost. I knew so much to his discredit that I was prepared to hate the man as well as to resent his presence, but I couldn't do it. Lord Crail added one more to the list

of people who are always upsetting my scheme of life. I'm always finding myself rather attracted to the men I meant to despise, and it makes things so difficult! You don't quite know how to behave.

Mary's father, when he chose to employ them, had both wit and charm, though the wit was rather destructive and, as Naïla put it, catty. For some unknown reason he chose me from those present at Shotland, to amuse himself with, and I must confess we soon found ourselves on very good terms indeed—all this, however, "without prejudice," as the lawyers say. I couldn't forgive him for the shame and sorrow and humiliation he had so industriously heaped upon his wife, and I never pretended to, but I was a little sorry for him. In great measure we are what we are, and the Earl of Crail had inborn tendencies to contend with (thank Heaven Mary escaped them!) that were stronger than he. He wasn't altogether responsible.

I said something of this sort to my Uncle George (whom I found looking extremely well and who greeted me with great affection). My uncle applauded the generous sentiments and said they were his sentiments too, but I observed that he kept rather carefully out of his host's way. It was plain to see that he didn't like Lord Crail, and that Lord Crail found little in my uncle to attract him. They had no meeting-ground at all.

Mary! There ought to be some different, new form of type in which to set forth that lovely name—some type which should indicate a change of tone, a softer and a tenderer sound. But alas! there isn't.

Those sunny, showery May days of gold and silver! Heavenly days for me! days of enchantment and the White

Magic. I thought her changed since the midwinter, a little quieter, less given to laughter and coquetry and the mockery that she'd been so used to delight in, a little more serious and rather pensive — altogether a gentler Mary. But her dark and splendid loveliness was as perfect as ever — more perfect than before, I think. "She walked in beauty like the night." (My Uncle George said so.)

I remember a day of days. Remember it? Shall I ever forget it, though I live to the span of Methuselah, of the Wandering Jew, and suffer all the agonies of that latter tortured soul? I think not.

There had been, from a broken sky, the tiniest of wee showers—scarcely enough to wet the turf, but still enough to drive Mary and me into the shelter of a little rustic summer-house down below the rose-garden near the moat (for the rose-garden was moated), where white swans sailed in majesty and plebeian ducks quacked under the bank. We had been there no more than a few moments when we caught sight of Henry and Naïla picking their way across the wide stretch of lawn toward the tennis-court, Naïla holding up her petticoats over as pretty a pair of ankles as any in England, I'll swear.

"Only a week more!" said I, for the banns had been read twice now. And Mary nodded her head.

"Yes, just a week more, then they'll be rid of us all. Won't Henry rejoice! I'm glad they're going to that nice place—what's its name? Grez sur Loing. They seem to have loved it so last year. What has become of the two old ladies who owned the house?"

I said the Misses Farnleigh meant to go to Switzerland this year and had been only too glad to let their place.

(The happy thought was Naïla's, but Henry had welcomed it with great joy.)

"I expect you'll be lonely in the Rue d'Assas, Bill," said Mary, and I answered that I'd been thinking of that, during the past week, and trying to get used to the prospect of doing without Henry from now on. It wasn't going to be easy, I was sure. Henry had been a habit with me for rather a long time. I said:

"Oh, yes! I shall be lonely, right enough. There's no doubt of *that*—though, thank Heaven! there's always the Bart. to fall back upon. If it weren't for the old Bart. I don't know what I should do."

"You ought to marry like Henry and settle down," said she, looking very friendly and sisterly and benignant. Why don't you marry Marian Castle? She'll be lonely, too, you know, without Naïla—that is, if such a self-contained being is capable of any feeling at all."

I couldn't even laugh. I gave a sort of groan, and took my head between my hands. It wasn't fair of Mary. It was plain cruelty.

"Oh, there's no marrying or giving in marriage for W. Castle!" said I, with my face hidden from her. "That sounds like heaven, doesn't it? Well, it isn't.

"And, for that matter, why don't you get married yourself? What are you shilly-shallying about with Archie Fellowes all this time? Why don't you put him out of his misery?"

"He's out of his misery—oh, long ago!" said Mary. "I shall never be a duchess, Bill. Poor me!"

I sat up and stared at her.

I remember that she had on a big, broad, flappy hat with red poppies on it, and against that big hat Mary's dark face

was lovelier and sweeter and softer and kinder than any woman's face has any right to be. When she looked like that—pensive, and a little sad, and yielding and tender, with her dark eyes turned away, and her lips parted, and her shoulders drooping the least bit—the strength began to go out of me by slow degrees, as if I'd an open wound in my breast and the heart's blood was dripping from it.

I said with some difficulty and in a sort of ridiculous whisper:

"Why? Why?"

"I didn't love him, Bill," said Mary.

"I was told—" said I, and then corrected it. "I somehow got the idea that there was more than just love to be considered—duty and influence and work for the country and a lot of other things that I forget just now. How about those?" Mary said:

"I couldn't seem to make them count very much against —just love." She turned her big eyes upon me and I began to tremble in the most absurd way and groaned and said her name (the only word I could think of) over and over again under my breath.

"Mary . . . Mary . . . Mary . . . Mary."

I was amazed to see that she was trembling too. It was all quite solemn and dreadful and rather funny.

Mary swallowed once or twice and broke out:

"Bill, aren't you *ever* going to ask me to marry you?"

"Oh, dear Mary," I groaned, "I can't. I mustn't. I promised your mother long, long ago. I've loved you ever since I was a little boy and you kissed me in my mother's drawing-room in Blandford, and said 'Bovver!' when I called you 'Lady Mary.' I've never loved anybody else and I never shall, but I'm only a poor painter-man whom nobody

has ever heard of—not at all the sort of person for you to marry, and I promised your mother. I can't, Mary. I can't."

"Very well, then," said Mary Borrow, "if you won't I must. (And don't you worry about mother. I'd a long talk with her yesterday and she threw up the sponge. *She's* all right.) William Castle, will you do me the honor to accept my heart and hand in marriage? Will you, Bill?"

I got somehow to my feet and so did Mary.

"Is that true?" I demanded. "Is that true about your mother?" She nodded her head—it seemed to be hard for her to speak—and I held out my arms and Mary came into them, and clung there, sweet and close, and began to cry.

After a long time she said:

"Of course I've been meaning to marry you all the time—from the first moment you stood and stared at me in your garden in the Rue d'Assas. But you *wouldn't* give me a chance!" I don't know what I said back to that. There wasn't much to say, was there?

So in those golden spring days my great happiness came to me at last. I dare say you knew all the while it was coming (like Mary), but I assure you *I* didn't. I wish I had. It would have saved me many a sleepless night and any quantity of spiritual wear and tear.

We went, Mary and I, back from the garden into the house—running at the last to escape another little shower—and there fell upon Lady Crail, who began to laugh. She said:

"You two look like a pair of children that have been stealing jam. Well, William, 'fess up!" Mary, the poltroon, turned her back and fled, but I took a long breath and asked if I might have a little talk with her ladyship, who laughed once more and led the way to her own sanctuary. There,

when she had closed the door behind us, she turned to me and kissed me on both cheeks and patted me on one of them, and said:

"Of course I know what it's all about, so I'll spare you the agony of explaining, and say at once that I'm very glad it has happened. Did Mary propose to you? I thought she would—the forward minx. Yes, Willie, I'm truly glad. Believe me! There was a time when I had other hopes for Mary, but at that time I really expected her to fall in love with Archie Fellowes. It looked as if she might. Well, she didn't, and I think it's a very good thing, too. He's a charming boy, but I've begun to realize that he's far too lazy and easy-going ever to be of any consequence in the world. He'll always be an idler, I'm afraid. And besides I wouldn't have Mary marry anybody, duke or not, without love. Never! Never!

"And so, Willie, I'm very happy indeed that she should have fallen in love with you. Nobody else could possibly have been so welcome to me, on the *personal* side, and as for the rest of it, you're already becoming famous and you'll soon be rich. What more could a mother demand?"

I spare you the rest of the long and reassuring and comfortable talk I had with my future mother-in-law. It was quite bewilderingly delightful to find that there were to be no obstacles in my path—not even from Mary's father, for her ladyship said she'd manage *him*, and she did. He actually seemed pleased over the match, saying I was a damned good sort, and as for rank and title, what were they worth, nowadays, when any greengrocer could buy them if he was rich enough?

Her ladyship added, on her own account, that it would be

a comfort to have a normal, old-fashioned pair of lovers in the house.

"Henry Trent and dear Naïla make me nervous. They 're so dreadfully serious and solemn and big-eyed over it. They're as spooky as if they didn't belong to this world at all. Aren't they going to find life rather difficult, Willie? Life isn't all gazing at the moon and reciting poetry, you know. What are they going to make of it? There's so little that is human and—and workaday about them!"

I laughed and said I thought they would settle down to facts after a while, and doubtless become very practical, humdrum people, but deep down inside me I wasn't quite so sure. It was a matter I had often thought about and wondered over during the past few days, and I dare say I should have thought and wondered a great deal more if my own sudden and unlooked-for happiness hadn't arrived to take my mind from everything else.

XXIV

HENRY TRENT and my cousin Naïla Castle were married at noon on the twenty-ninth of May, 1899, and left almost immediately for London, where they were to stay the night, then another night in Paris, and, on the following day, go to Grez sur Loing, where the Misses Farnleighs' house was open and waiting.

Marian followed them a day later, meaning to go on from Paris to Berlin, where she had friends. She seemed very uncertain about her future plans—or, at least, very uncommunicative, and her manner made it impossible for any one to press her with questions. I couldn't get rid of an idea that she was going through a good deal of dumb suffering just then, on more than one score, but if she was, nobody could say that he had seen any sign of it. She was incredibly shut in behind that still and mask-like face. So she left us, with just the proper words of thanks and appreciation and good wishes and farewell, but with no visible emotion of any kind, and turned her face outward toward a world that must have looked very empty to her.

She was a strange woman.

At the same time my Uncle George made his adieus, and sailed back to America, leaving behind him many warm and affectionate and regretful hearts. I had hoped to keep him with me at least through the summer, but I think he was a little homesick. However, he promised to return for my

wedding, whenever that might be (the engagement had delighted him beyond all bounds), and so I let him go.

Mary kissed him good-bye.

The Bart. and I departed also at the end of the week, meaning to spend a fortnight in Paris and then return to London, where, by that time, the Crails would be settled in their house in Grosvenor Square, and I was to be led into a round of dinner-parties, dances, and other genial indoor sports. In August we were all to go to Switzerland together.

I had made a pretentious, though really feeble, demand for immediate marriage, but this Mary had laughed to scorn, saying that she hadn't the least idea of marrying me until a year had passed. And, on the whole (and allowing for a young man's natural impatience in such matters), I wasn't inconsolable, for I rather expected to make important strides in my profession within that twelvemonth, and to go to the altar wearing rather more laurel leaves than I could get together just now. It didn't seem unlikely, for my pictures both at the Salon and at Burlington House had had a pleasant success (though far overshadowed by Henry's great triumphs), and I had got a second-class medal at the Salon and four orders for portraits to be painted in the autumn.

So I went with the Bart. to Paris in a fairly cheerful frame of mind, though depressed by a tragic parting with Mary, whom I shouldn't see again for two long weeks—an incalculable space of time when you begin to divide it up into hours and minutes.

We had, after a week, a little letter from Henry, written, of course, at Grez, and, in a day or two, another, from Naïla. Henry's letter said that the weather had been beautiful and

that Naïla was looking extremely well. Naïla's said that the roses were beginning and that Henry was in rude health. They both begged us to come out to Grez for a little visit before we went to London, and the Bart. asked:

"Why not? It will be rather a lark to see them bill and coo. We needn't stay for more than two days and it 'll give us a chance to pin old Henry down to some definite plans about future work. He's the most famous painter in the world to-day and it's our job to see he doesn't slack too long. He's confoundedly lazy, Henry is. We shall have to prod him up or he won't work at all—now he has got what he wants."

I needed no argument to convince me of the truth of that, and besides I was very glad of a chance to see Henry and Naïla once more. So, near the end of our allotted time in Paris, we took a noon train from the Gare de Lyon and went to Grez.

There had been some misunderstanding about hours, and our two friends weren't at Bourron to meet us, so we drove the short distance alone (Grez isn't on the railway line), and, leaving our bags at the inn, where old Mme. Chevillon and M. Paul and poor Van Torp (much the worse for drink, I regret to say) greeted us warmly, we set out for the house on the hill.

The Trents weren't there, but we found them at last in a boat on the river, and halloed from the banks until we made them hear us. Then they came ashore at once and we went back up to the house together. They hadn't expected us until evening.

In a purely physical and external sense I thought them both looking very well indeed—Naïla was sunburnt, and Henry (who never got burnt, but turned slowly a darker

brown) had a healthy color and clear, bright eyes. They welcomed us very warmly, and said how sorry they were to have misunderstood our telegram and that we must stay a long time—all summer if we would. Indeed, they seemed quite hurt that we meant to be off for London in a couple of days.

I have said they looked well in a physical and external sense—It would need a much subtler pen than mine to give you any clear idea of just what it was about them that disappointed me. It wasn't anything external—at least, I think not. It was an air—an atmosphere—something I felt rather than saw, just as one feels a coming storm. It's quite impossible to describe.

I dare say there were little, scarcely noticeable, physical things, too, to help it out—rather more gravity than one likes to see in newly married lovers—an increase rather than a diminution in the fixed, haunted look in the eyes of both. Yes, half a dozen little signs like that. It's no good going into them all, even if I could. But I felt a little chill all over me that was half disappointment and half dread of I didn't know what.

Something quite vague and undefinable was wrong. I couldn't help being aware of that.

We sat for a while on the shady terrace of the house, the Bart. and I talking very busily, Henry and his wife rather silent and brooding. Then Henry insisted upon our having a look at his vegetable garden, out of which he had patiently dug a great many of its treasures under the impression that they were weeds. So we looked at what remained of the garden and praised it, and afterward—I don't quite know how it came about—I found that Naïla and I had separated ourselves from the others and were descending the farther slope of the hill toward the old weir.

We sat down on a bench, but the water made too much noise there and we moved farther away and found a flat, comfortable rock still warm from the afternoon sun. Neither of us said anything for rather a long time, but at last I demanded:

"Well, Naïla?" and my cousin stopped twisting her hands together in her lap, and turned her big eyes up to me. She said:

"It isn't well, dear Bill." I uttered a cry of distress and sympathy, and caught her hands in mine, and Naïla pressed close up against me on the flat rock, and I could feel that she was trembling.

"Oh, dear, dear Naïla!" I said. "What is it that's wrong? I felt something from the very first moment. What is it? Aren't you and Henry happy together?"

"As ordinary human happiness goes, Bill," said my cousin, "I should think that there were never two people more blissful than we've been. Never! Never! It has been perfect— Oh, more than that! Unspeakable. I'd never even guessed that people had it in them."

"Well, then!" I cried. "What are you complaining of? What's wrong?"

"It wasn't ordinary human happiness that Henry wanted, Bill dear," said my cousin Naïla. And I said "Oh!" in a whisper.

She hid her face against me for a moment, and I thought she was going to cry, but she didn't. She said:

"Oh, how I've wanted you to talk to! I could hardly wait. I just *had* to have somebody to cry on and be petted by; and there's nobody but you, Bill. Marian and I— we aren't the same, any more. And I couldn't go to Henry about this—Henry least of all people.

"You see, what Henry dreamed of and saw in visions and worked for and lived for is *something that can't be in this earthly life*. There's the whole truth in a word. He wanted the 'unfindable,' and I can't give him that (not in this world)."

"Oh, Naïla!" said I, "you're talking in riddles. All this is far over my head. I don't understand. Henry wanted *you, you*. He saw visions of you all his life, and loved you and worked for you. Well, now he has you. What more does he want?"

"Perfection, Bill," said Naïla. "Perfection—the sort of thing everybody dreams of vaguely, and has little momentary visions of sometimes when he's hearing lovely music, or smelling flowers in a garden in the dark, or feeling the inspiration for a poem—the sort of thing you and I have thrilled with and ached with at moments of—what shall I say?—of exaltation.

"The *perfect* love, the *perfect* happiness without human limitations—the thing that just a little faint, pale glimpse of inspires poets and painters and musicians to make immortal works. Everybody has moments of it, but geniuses have more moments and longer ones than other people, and Henry, who is a very great genius indeed, had most of all.

"I suppose the best name for it, after all, is '*heaven*,' don't you? That is, if you take heaven as a name for a state of absolute unqualified happiness—the most exquisite moment you ever knew multiplied a million times in intensity, and then drawn out and out so that it lasts forever.

"That's what Henry saw so clearly when he was a child, and remembered, not so clearly, ever afterward, and dreamed of and longed for and looked forward to. The 'Introuvable' (and that's *me*) was a *symbol* of it, if you understand what I

mean. It stood for the connecting link between Henry and —Perfection—heaven—eternity. It was the *other half* that was to complete him, when he found it, and make him whole, at last, and ready for what was to come. For you see, dear Bill, that's what sex is—the queer, incomprehensible, funny division of a whole being into two halves. When the halves are united again then there's completion.

"Henry was searching and searching and searching for the other half of his soul. That was what he had to have first of all. After that the rest would come.

"And now do you understand?"

"Oh, not very well, dear Naïla," said I. "It's all still far over my head. I must have time to think about it. I'm such a dull old party! But even if it were quite clear I still don't see why things aren't all right, now that Henry has found you. What are you afraid of? What's wrong?"

"Bill," said my cousin Naïla, "do you realize that perfection—completeness—heaven (whatever name you choose) *belongs the other side of the grave?*"

I gave an angry, frightened cry at that, and caught Naïla up to me and held her there fast.

"Henry doesn't know that. He hasn't realized it yet. He thinks he has got what he waited so long for, here in this world, but he hasn't.

"Oh, Bill, when he finds out! That's what I'm in daily, hourly terror of. Some day he'll find out—to-day—to-morrow—next month—some dreadful day. Just now he's happy. Human love that he knew so little about—as little as a girl, believe me!—has been enough for him, so far. How long will that blind his eyes, do you think? And what will happen when he finds out?

"Once or twice already I've seen things come into his

mind—little ghosts of questions or doubt. One day they'll come there and remain, and Henry will know what I know now, and everything will be spoiled for him—quite spoiled and ruined and destroyed.

"Ah, we shouldn't have met, he and I—not in this life! We should have waited and found each other *there*."

She drew herself out of my arms and got to her feet, and stood for a little while with her back turned, looking down at the still brown water above the weir.

"If only this wretched heart of mine could drop a beat or two just now! That would settle it all, quite comfortably, wouldn't it, Bill?"

"Oh Naïla, Naïla!" I cried. "That's cruel of you. Don't say things like that even in fun."

"But I don't mean it in fun," said Naïla, facing me once more. "I'm quite serious. If I could die now while everything is happy and beautiful and unspoiled it would be far, far best for both of us. Henry would suffer for a little while, but not so much as you think, for he'd know I was there, beyond, waiting for him, and he'd come before very long."

"Oh!" I cried out. "*Henry! Henry!* Everything's *Henry*. For Heaven's sake, Naïla dear, aren't *you* ever to be considered in anything?" Naïla laughed a little, shaking her head.

"There isn't any me! I'm a part of Henry Trent. He has absorbed me, Bill. I haven't any happiness or any sorrow apart from him. Do you think I'd care to go on living when I know that just any day all our happiness may be wrecked—smashed? No, indeed! We've had, in these past two weeks, all that life can give us. We could never do any more, here, than go on repeating these two weeks,

Beyond— Ah! I can't tell you about that. But there's such a lot more!

"I truly wish I could go. I wish Henry and I could go together—now, before any clouds come."

She was absolutely in earnest and quite cool and calm and unemotional about it, without the slightest trace of anything like hysteria.

I didn't know what to say back. I was overcome by grief and sorrow that such a state of affairs should have come into Henry's and Naïla's life (or that she should think they had), and I was full of incoherent words of sympathy and protest, but the words wouldn't get as far as my tongue. I could only sit and fidget and stare at the ground.

Besides, there really was an excellent chance that poor Naïla's heart might fail her, any day or any moment, and I didn't want to give her a melancholy point of view about that—even if I could.

It was all very dreadful and difficult and far too much for the simple grasp of W. Castle. I was glad when we heard the voices of Henry and the Bart. near at hand, and they came to join us.

The Bart. and I had meant to go back to the inn, turn out our travelling-bags, and change before dinner, but the Trents said that would be silly, and that we'd all dine just as we were. So we did, all but Naïla, who couldn't resist disappearing for ten minutes and making herself lovely in a white dinner-dress that gave her neck and arms a chance.

We dined at eight, with candles on the table, and drank some horrible Barsac that the Misses Farnleigh must have bought at the estaminet in the village (if they didn't make it themselves). Naïla, as if to prove to me that she wasn't too

downhearted, became very gay and witty, and Henry, after a bit, seemed more like his old self—the Henry of two years back—than I had seen him in many a moon. He could be, when he chose, more winning and affectionate and full of magnetic intimate charm than any other man I have ever known in my life, and so he chose to be on this evening. It was Henry at his very best.

I am glad to remember him so.

Then after dinner we sat in the big drawing-room—a huge enclosure with rafters and a gigantic fireplace of stone and deep, comfortable couches with cushions—and we smoked, and later on Naïla sang to us divinely, in her great, breathy, whispering voice which had grown bigger and wider with her increasing health, but was still the gigantic ghost of a voice and no more, for the vocal chords were ruined quite past any repair.

She sang a little German song and the beautiful "Solveig's Lied" out of "Peer Gynt," and then another German song that I'd never before heard, and lastly, to my great delight, "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix"—a performance magnificent beyond any words of description or appreciation. It left me quite limp and shaky—overcome with sheer pleasure.

It overcame Henry, too, who sat through it with his head in his hands, but, after Naïla had finished, got to his feet and walked up and down the room. He looked rather dazed and almost bewildered as if he weren't quite wide awake. I saw Naïla gazing at him rather anxiously, and, once when he was at the other end of the long room, she said to me:

"Oh, dear! I wish I hadn't sung to-night. Henry adores it, but sometimes it—upsets him. I'm not sure it isn't dan-

gerous." I knew what she meant by that, for I remembered only too well how close to him that other world (that Naïla called "heaven") had been used to draw when he listened to a singing voice.

Dangerous indeed! I too began to wish she hadn't sung.

I got the Bart.'s eye and said we must be off to our beds, so that we could tumble out betimes for an early swim. Henry brought himself back to life with an obvious effort and made some mild protest about its not being late, but I said it was quite late enough, and that we should all meet again in the morning. So he fetched a shaded candle, and we found our hats, and the four of us went out by the main door of the house, which gave upon the garden, and so round in a semicircle to the gate in the garden wall.

Naïla and I fell a little way behind the others and she drew close to me so that I slipped one arm about her shoulders as we walked. There was a moon overhead, nearly full. Naïla shivered and said:

"Hold me close, dear Bill! I feel rather lonely and afraid." But afterward she took it back.

"No! I don't mean that, really. I'm never lonely or afraid while Henry's near. One couldn't be. I didn't mean what I said."

Then:

"Bill, answer me a question, quite honestly, without asking questions back. Suppose a person was sure—*quite* sure—that he could save dreadful suffering and despair and shipwreck and all kinds of horrors by an act that most people call wicked and sinful, do you think that person would do right in committing the act?"

I hadn't the vaguest idea what she meant—Naïla was always propounding tremendous questions like that—and

I laughed a little and said—God forgive me!—"If the person is *quite* sure, I think he ought to do it, whatever it may be."

Naïla looked up at me—I saw her smile in the moonlight—and squeezed my arm and said:

"Thank you! dearest Bill. I think so too. Let's hope the person will never be put to the test." Then we came to the door in the garden wall where Henry and the Bart. were waiting, and said good-night, and went out into the dusty road.

I glanced back once when the Bart. and I had gone a little way, and they were still standing there in the open door, Henry with the candle in its glass globe held up over his head, and Naïla beside him clinging to his other arm. She kissed her hand to me and I called back another good-night. Then they turned away and the door clicked behind them.

I can see her now standing there in the darkness with the feeble yellow light of that candle falling down across her face and across her shoulders—throwing me a kiss the while she clung to her husband's arm.

The Bart. and I, instead of returning at once to the inn, went for a walk along the country roads in the moonlight, as we had used to do the year before. The Bart. was very voluble and had a great deal to say about how jolly and friendly and intimate and human old Henry had been at dinner, though rather spooky afterward—but then, music always *did* stir him up; and how sweet and beautiful Naïla was—almost the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen—quite too lovely for words. Also he dwelt on how happy and comfortable the Trents were together, and prophesied that it wouldn't take more than a year of domesticity to make an altogether different man of Henry—quite sane and hu-

man and like other people (a favorite theory of the Bart.'s, as you may have gathered).

And when that happy alteration was effected one might hope to see the fellow begin to take a reasonable point of view about his painting, on which subject he was at present hopelessly cracked.

It seems the Bart. had been at Henry on that score, while Naïla and I were talking together, and had retired in a state of mingled grief and rage because he couldn't awaken the slightest interest in our friend, who said he didn't think he should ever paint again. What was the good of it?

"God deliver us from geniuses!" cried the old Bart., piously. "They're enough to turn your hair white."

We must have walked and talked in this strain for close upon two hours, I should think—though it was the Bart. who did most of the talking, for I was rather down and depressed. What Naïla had said to me before dinner weighed upon my mind and I wanted to share it with the Bart., but finally didn't. It would be a little disloyal, I thought—besides, it would have distressed him.

Anyhow, when we had made a big circle and were coming into the village once more from the opposite side, and I looked at my watch, it was ten minutes to one o'clock.

We heard sounds of beating on a door, or on shutters, and a voice shouting even before we'd turned the corner and come within sight of the inn.

"Somebody's got locked out," said I. And the Bart. said:

"He's precious excited about it. I expect it's poor old Van Torp, drunk again." Then we came near and it was a man with a bicycle sprawling at his feet, who beat upon the closed shutters with both hands and called incessantly.

M. Paul thrust an angry and dishevelled head out of an upper window just as we appeared, and we caught the broken words of the man with the bicycle. We recognized the voice, too. It was the Trents' gardener, and he was summoning us to the house on the hill!

Henry wanted us. Naïla had fallen very ill—a fainting spell. He (the gardener) was on his way to Marlotte to fetch the doctor.

We began to run before we had heard the last of it, and my heart was pounding so that I thought it would choke me. It almost shut off my breathing altogether. Once, I remember, the Bart. panted at my shoulder:

"Easy does it, old Bill! You'll run yourself off your feet." But we tore on through the warm night, past the church and away from the highroad into the lane that led up the hill. At the last, I know, we had to slacken into an exhausted walk and toil up the incline like a pair of blown cab-horses. But at the door in the garden wall we began to run again.

We came upon Henry standing in the open doorway of the house (that door which gave straight into the big drawing-room) with the lamplight from within falling across him. He had heard our footsteps and come to meet us. He called out into the dark:

"C'est le docteur?" but then saw who it was, and said, "Ah! it's you, Bill, and the Bart. You came very quickly."

We stopped before him, breathing hard, and I cried:

"What is it, Henry? for Heaven's sake! The man said Naïla was ill. What's wrong?" Henry took me by the shoulders and held me with his hands. His face was quite calm and smiling.

"Naïla's dead, old Bill. Her heart, you know—it just

[illegible] We'd always known it might. It stunned me [illegible] We'd been talking together—about some [illegible] she asked me to get her a glass of water, [illegible] Then she asked me if I'd go to her room and [illegible] volatile. She kissed me, and I went [illegible] When I came back she was dead. I—went [illegible] for half an hour, and then sent Frédéric [illegible] That's all."

[illegible] confess that I went quite to pieces at [illegible] I broke down and sobbed like a [illegible] Bart. covered his face with his [illegible]

[illegible] again in a voice that shook [illegible]

[illegible] with his arm about my [illegible] what calming, soothing [illegible] comforting a frightened child. [illegible] last—or Henry had [illegible]

[illegible] to the house to- [illegible] the middle of the [illegible] among the [illegible] rather dim [illegible]

[illegible] asleep, with [illegible] There [illegible] the room [illegible] to have sur- [illegible] peaceful [illegible] not quite [illegible] them.

[illegible] there

was a broken water-glass near by on the floor. I fancied that Henry had been trying to revive her.

Ah, that prophetic soul of hers!—to have looked forward to this and wished for it only a few little hours ago. How swiftly her prayer had been answered!

I bent above that lovely habitation from which my cousin's soul had fled, and gazed a long time into the still face.

Naïla! Naïla!

It seemed to me that there was the faintest of all possible suggestions of some unusual odor in the air. It was too faint to determine, almost too faint to distinguish at all, and at first I thought it might be a scent that Naïla had about her clothes—lavender or orris root or something like that. I scarcely wondered about it at all save to reflect for a moment that it was rather a bitter scent. I must have said that word to myself, and it must have suggested something —spurred my wits—for all at once I knew what the bitter odor was—the odor which was like bitter almonds.

I only wonder that I didn't cry out, but, thank God! I had self-control enough to keep still—only, for an instant, my head went round and round, and I was swept by the keenest anguish that I have ever known in all my life.

Naïla! Naïla!

And to think that I, myself, all blindly and unknowing, had helped her on her terrible way!

"If the person is *quite* sure, I think he ought to do it, whatever it may be."

My own words. My own words.

She must have acted upon them almost within the hour. But why that night? Why so soon? Ah! that talk "about some serious things!"

She must have had a fright during that talk with Henry, and so—out into the cold and dark!

No! Naïla, I take that back. No cold and dark for you, my dear! No gray uncertainties, no bitterness of loss. Not out into the cold and dark, but up into the warmth and the light eternal.

Then a little space of waiting, and at last the two half souls made one—perfection attained—the joy that has no ending.

I see her standing at the door between the worlds. There is a smile in her great gray eyes. Henry's last kiss upon her lips.

And the instrument is quick and keen and merciful. No lingering in agony. She is gone in the wink of an eye.

I remember that the Misses Farnleigh used to collect butterflies.

Kneeling there, beside the couch where Naïla lay, I covered my face and tried to think. Both for her sake and for Henry's the thing she had done must never be known—never if I could prevent it. There was no danger of Henry's discovering it now, unaided. He was the simplest, least suspicious of all souls, and had noticed nothing even when the deed was fresh. But there was a doctor coming! I prayed the man might be a countryman and dull-witted.

There was a window near the head of the couch. It was closed, but the curtains were undrawn. I saw the moon and a sky of stars through the glass. I got to my feet, pulled the window wide open and leaned out of it as if to breathe the air. A little night wind bore in, fresh and cool and fragrant. The curtains swayed before it, and it lifted the brown hair gently from Naïla's white brow.

A few moments of that and there would be no more linger-

ing scent of bitter almonds—not even enough for a country doctor to detect.

Then I turned back to where Henry and the Bart. stood together in the centre of the room.

"She died without pain, I think," said Henry to me, and I answered:

"Yes, Henry, and without sorrow. I'm sure of that."

The Bart. went to the couch-side and stood there a little while looking upon what lay so peacefully among the cushions. He bent over, touched his lips to Naïla's hand and so turned back to us. He looked haggard and pale—but so, very likely, did I. I said:

"The doctor is a long time coming," and Henry nodded his head.

"It doesn't matter. He can't do anything when he comes. I sent for him as a sort of form." He looked from the Bart.'s bowed head to mine and smiled. His own face was white and uplifted—with a sort of exaltation that I had never before seen there. Even Henry's burning, haunted eyes burned no longer—they were at peace. He put out his arms over our shoulders as the three of us stood there together in the lamplight.

"I won't have you two pulling long faces!" said he. "I won't have you mourning and wringing your hands. So stop it at once!" There was a kind of solemn gayety about him, a sort of hushed but tremendous inner excitement, despite his still face and quiet eyes. I began to wonder if the shock hadn't put him a little beside himself.

"Naïla's gone," said Henry, "but it's better so. We didn't quite belong here, she and I. It was—only a waiting-place, and I think we both knew it. I said something

of the kind to her this very evening, after you two had left."

Ah! did you, Henry? Did you, indeed!

"The *real* thing's beyond," said he, "where Naïla is now." He pushed us gently toward the door.

"Leave me alone with her! there's a good Bill—and Bart."

We would have drawn him with us out into the moonlight, but Henry wouldn't come. He squeezed our hands in turn and smiled upon us. Henry's old winning smile—but with a difference.

"The doctor will turn up presently. Do you wait for him outside! I shall be with Naïla."

So he turned back into the room where Naïla was, and the Bart. and I walked together in the moonlight.

We never spoke for what must have been, I should think, quite half an hour. We were beyond speech—stunned and crushed and broken.

Oh, Naïla, Naïla! what have you done?

And what's to become of Henry Trent now, Naïla?

The Bart. and I paced up and down that terrace with bowed heads and our hands clasped behind us. I felt as if hours were passing; but at last there came voices, and the doctor and Frédéric came hurrying together.

It *was* a countryman, luckily, a middle-aged, rather flurried and nervous little man with a long beard, and his coat buttoned up about his neck to hide the fact that he hadn't waited to put on a collar.

We explained in few words that young Mme. Trent had died suddenly an hour and a half ago of a disease of the heart which had long threatened her—that her husband was with her in the house. The doctor mopped his brow and

asked if he might enter at once. I said, "By all means!" and we turned toward the door.

We began to run, for there came the sudden loud sound of a revolver-shot—just one.

Henry was kneeling beside his wife's body with his head on her breast, and he had done what he had to do carefully, without haste. He was quite dead when we reached him.

He had been truthful even to the last. I never knew Henry to tell a lie.

"*I shall be with Naïla.*"

And so he was. So he was.

AN EPILOGUE

HERE endeth the life of Henry Trent and, with it, the book I have made about him. He went from us with a smile and a hand-clasp. He left us there in outer darkness and turned back into the light where Naïla was. He must have known what he was going to do, but he went to it eagerly, with a glad, rapt face and shining eyes—the bridegroom to the bride's arms. I suppose I ought to have been glad too, but I, you see, was left in the darkness, and it was hard to face a life without Henry in it—cruelly hard.

There turned out to be some difficulty in the matter of burial, so the Bart. and I bought a little plot of ground—a knoll—a tiny hilltop on the border of the Farnleighs' land (which those ladies didn't own). It was stony ground, but there were flowers and shrubs on it and one great, spreading cedar-tree, and it looked down upon the lazy river that they had so loved, and far away over meadow and wood to the blue hills. There in one grave we laid Henry Trent and his wife together, and set a modest stone at their bed's head, and hired a peasant of the neighborhood to tend the place and keep it free of weeds.

Lady Crail and Mary came from England to be present at the funeral, Marian came from Germany, the Misses Farnleigh from Switzerland, and a half-dozen friends from Paris.

It was a dark day but ended fair, with a glorious sunset.

So had their two mortal lives begun and ended. But I think the sun shines forever where they are now.

I suppose it is unnecessary to speak here of the great fame that came to Henry from the exhibition of his five masterpieces—a fame which, although begun in the spring of 1899, didn't reach its height until after he was gone. It is unnecessary to speak of the consternation and sorrow and the realization of public loss that his untimely death spread through the world of art. Those are matters well enough known. The canvas shown at the Salon was bought by the French Government for the Luxembourg (but shown again in the Grand Palais during the Exposition de 1900—you may remember the sensation it created); the "Unknown Lady," at Burlington House, was purchased by old Lord Mendham; the one in Munich by a Prussian iron-master; and the two others, which hadn't been exhibited at all, were sold, one to Mr. W. Jaynes, the American, and the other to the Duca di St. Angelo.

The Bart. and I acted as Henry's executors in these as well as any other matters that came up, and the money was sent to his mother, together with many newspaper clippings that bore witness to his fame and to the wide-spread grief over his death. I had back from her a brief letter of acknowledgment in which a cold and undying hostility was the one sentiment to be discovered. The poor lady had never forgiven me for having helped to take Henry from her, and she never will forgive me. It was I who had first seduced him to the ruin of his career. But for me he might have been a village lawyer, responsible, respected, a pride to his mother's declining years.

But a dweller among dissolute foreigners—a picture-painter! She had her opinion of picture-painters, Hen-

ry's mother had, and not all his world-wide fame, not even the total strangers who visited Blandford to see the house where Henry Trent was born, could alter that.

Poor gray goose that had hatched a swan!

What more remains to be told? Nothing, I should think, save the briefest of all brief words as to what has befallen the little circle of Henry's friends—those of us who have appeared in the course of this rambling chronicle and possibly have become friends of yours, too.

It will not take long to dispose of *us*. We don't matter much. Let's get about it!

The Bart. and I kept possession of the studio in the Rue d'Assas through the following winter and worked hard there, but it wasn't the same place any more, and I think we were glad to give it up when spring came. Mary (God bless her!) had come nobly to the rescue after Henry's death and offered to marry me at once if I wanted her to. We talked it over, but in the end decided to hold to our former plan, and so were married with pomp and circumstance in May of the year 1900, and, after our return from a summer's honeymoon, I set up a studio in London (later, one in New York as well), and formally began the practice of my profession, which, as you know, is portrait-painting. I suppose I have become what you would call a very successful and even fashionable painter, and, if you live in London or New York and go to dinner-parties and dances, you doubtless have met Mr. and the Lady Mary Castle (under other names), and have been captivated by the splendid beauty (which grows more splendid each year) and the charm and friendliness and magnetism of Lady Mary, and have wondered how in

the world she ever found it possible to marry that dull dog, W. Castle.

The Bart. has become eminent in *his* profession too, but it hasn't altered him in the least. He is the same simple and sincere and charming Bart. that he always was, and he is the closest friend we have. His poor mad wife died a few years ago, and so he is free, but I don't believe he will ever marry again. I remember a talk we had not long after Naïla Trent's death. I don't mean to repeat it here, for I hold it sacredly confidential, but I think I may say that the good old Bart. goes through his life with the image of a certain lovely lady enshrined in his heart, and so he will go, I believe, to the end.

May that be a long, long way!

My beautiful mother-in-law no longer reigns at Shotland, for Lord Crail is dead and a rather queer second cousin has inherited the title and estate. She has a place in Hampshire, less grand, perhaps, than her old home, but no less lovely. She is very happy there and fills the house with her friends, and Mary and I are regular visitors and stay so long each time that I wonder we don't get turned out. Her ladyship is still a young woman, despite her years, and I can think of very few people who have a better time than she does. She hasn't by any means forgotten my Uncle George, and only last summer wrote to ask him if he wouldn't come to England once more and make her a visit.

He was delighted with the invitation but shook his head over it a bit sadly, and I think he'll never again cross the ocean, for my uncle is seventy-two now, and though hale and hearty no longer goes far afield. He and Mary still adore each other. Indeed, if I should die to-night . . . Heaven knows!

I wonder if you haven't often seen my uncle walking in Fifth Avenue on a fine afternoon. About four o'clock he starts out from his club and walks up the east side of the avenue to Fifty-ninth Street, then back down the west side. You'll know him by his white hair and mustache, and his carefully ironed hat, and his black morning coat, and lemon-colored gloves, and trousers of what used to be called Marseilles cloth (small black-and-white checks). He is a little bent at the shoulders now, but his cheeks are ruddy and his eye as bright as a bird's. Any quantity of people bow to my Uncle George as he walks along, or even stop him for a friendly word.

And in the winter-time you'll find him dozing comfortably in people's opera-boxes.

May he live forever!

J. Fordyce I sometimes meet, de par le monde, in London —less often in New York. He writes amusing stories and is, I believe, rather popular, but he's such an arrant snob and such a persistent tuft-hunter nowadays that I find him a little offensive and don't seek his company much.

Laplace, that genial ruffian, has passed beyond my ken. Heaven knows where he may be. And may the same Heaven prosper him! But of Meunier you may remember the Bart. spoke briefly in the letter I quoted at the beginning of this history. The little Hungarian I've lost too, and Jellaby I haven't seen for years. The flat German girl disappeared from Paris during my last winter there, immediately after the sad death (by pneumonia) of M. Anatole Cuvier, whom she nursed devotedly to the end. I don't know what has become of her. Is she still painting trees sky-blue, I wonder?

And where on the face of this wide world that so teems with hiding-places is Marian Castle to-day? She came

from Germany to stand beside Naïla's and Henry's grave on the hill, so many years ago, and I had a little talk with her then—a most painful one, for she broke down and wept and accused herself of having been a traitor to Naïla, through jealousy, and said she was the lowest and most contemptible of living beings, unless Judas, the Juif Errant, was still afield; that she should never be able to forgive herself—nor would God—if there was one—ever forgive her, either. I had never beheld such a bitterness of lonely, unappeasable grief, and I think I never shall again. I tried to comfort her, but she didn't want comfort, and the next day she went away again, and from that time to this I have never seen her face. I wrote several times, but she didn't answer my letters, and presently they began to be returned to me from the post-office with "address unknown," or words to that effect, stamped across them.

One dreary winter's day a tall lady in black spoke my name as I was crossing the Tuileries Gardens. I looked up and the lady was Olga Samaroff. She was thin and white and looked very much broken, indeed—and years older. I hardly knew her. She said:

"Oh, Mr. Castle, won't you even speak to me?" and I replied quite truthfully that I had been buried in thought. She wasn't a welcome vision, I must confess, but she looked so ill and wretched that I couldn't help feeling a little pang of pity. I said:

"You're in black. May I offer my condolence?" And she thanked me, explaining that her husband had died two months before.

"But I think you know, Mr. Castle, that it isn't Boris Samaroff I'm mourning. It is Henry Trent."

"Need you and I speak about him?" I asked, and began

to be angry. But she nodded her head with such a sad and quiet dignity that my anger was ashamed and hid itself away.

"Yes, just for a moment, please! Then I'll let you go, and we probably sha'n't meet again, for I am leaving Paris in a few days, I think forever.

"I loved him. I want you to know that. I loved him truly and well, though my love couldn't ever have done him any good, even if he had taken it, because I have not been a good woman. I should have dragged him down, I suppose, and so it's a good thing he didn't want me. But I loved him.

"That mayn't seem important to you, just now, Mr. Castle, but later on, when you're older and more charitable, it will. You'll be glad then to look back and realize that even *I* loved Henry Trent, and wasn't just cheaply luring him away for vanity's sake.

"That's all. That's what I stopped you to say. One day you'll be glad of it."

Mme. Samaroff bowed again and turned before I could speak, and walked rapidly away. I should have liked to run after her, but I hesitated a moment, and then it was too late.

And that was the last time I ever saw the beautiful Russian lady. More than once in Paris and in London I have asked for news of her, but she seems to have disappeared completely from her old world.

Have I picked us all up now and laid us away? I think so. I think my task is over—my labor of love in Henry Trent's behalf. It has been a long task, longer than I expected. I have spent three months upon it. And now it's done.

In a few days Mary and I shall be on our way to England, and there, as the Bart. promised, he and I will go arm-in-

arm down to the Tate Gallery and stand before the second of Henry's national monuments—gaze once more into the eyes of Henry's "Unknown Lady"—Naïla's eyes.

How memories will come crowding back upon us! Sweet and bitter; bitter and sweet.

Then, after that, I think we three—Mary, the Bart., and I—shall go to Paris and for the first time in ten years revisit the studio in the Rue d'Assas, which we haven't yet had the courage to enter for fear of the ghosts that are there. And after that still, I think, we shall go to Grez.

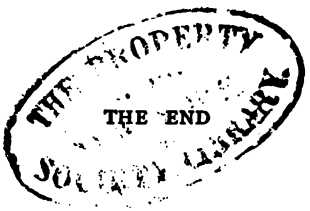
A little series of pilgrimages, as you see! I think what I want is light. Perhaps in Henry's old haunts, the places he loved and lived in, I shall find it at last—light—if only a pale glimmer—light upon the great question that has tormented me so long.

Why was such a soul as Henry Trent's put into this world —where it so manifestly didn't belong—to grope and suffer and starve?

For the sake of the five great pictures he painted? I can't believe that. The pictures were too plainly a by-product. He didn't starve and suffer and grope for them. There must be some other, better reason.

Accident? No! I'm no theologian, as I have already pointed out (and proved), but I reject sheer accident as a determining cause in human lives. So I ask my question, and, presently, set out in search of light upon it.

What did it all mean?



THE END